The Islâmic Conquest of Syria

A translation of *Futûhushâm*:
The inspiring history of the Sahâbah's conquest of Syria.



al-Imâm al-Wâqidî

Translated by
Mawlânâ Sulaymân al-Kindî

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A translation of Futûhushâm: the inspiring history of the Sahâbah's ؓ conquest of Syria as narrated by the great historian of Islâm,

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Translator's Foreword

Futûhushâm is an Arabic book by al-Imâm al-Wâqidî describing the Sahâbah's ﷺ conquest of ash-Shâm (which today includes Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and parts of Arabia, Irâq and Turkey). Having been requested to translate this book into English, I accepted primarily to earn Allâh's pleasure from whatever good might arise from it and also to attain two secondary goals.

Firstly, Rasûlullâh ﷺ said with regard to loving the Sahâbah ﷺ, "Whoever loves them, loves them because he loves me." So if this book can be used to inculcate the love of the Sahâbah ﷺ in the reader's heart, love for Rasûlullâh ﷺ is also increased. This subject needs no elaboration since 'Ulamâ have extensively dealt with it.

However, the second goal of making Muslims realise the importance of History needs more elaboration. Muslims are generally ignorant of their history, thus developing an inferiority complex towards the West. This is, in fact, a deliberate strategy by the West. In the past, great 'Ulamâ of all mathâhib have rendered service to the science of History. Ibn Khaldûn al-Mâlikî is globally recognised to be the father of the principles of studying history. Ibn Jawzî al-Hambalî noted, "A faqîh has to have knowledge of other sciences like history..." The Mufassir, Ibn Kathîr ash-Shâfi'î put great effort in compiling his celebrated history book, 'Al-Bidâyah wan-Nihâyah'. Similarly al-Imâm al-Bukhârî also saw the need for studying and compiling works on history. Today we feel qualified to dissect the works of these Ulamâ and pick and choose what we want. Thus we will quote the Tafsîr of Ibn Kathîr and the Hadîth of al-Bukhârî but never spare a glance at the Histories. What authority do we have to decide that such-and-such a subject must be

preserved while other sciences of our ancestors should be thrown away? Mawlânâ Abu al-Hasan 'Ali an-Nadwî was one of the greatest Hanafî 'Ulamâ of our time and both 'Arabs and Indians acknowledge his status, but would he have attained this status if he had not mastered History? Amongst his most popular compilations are Târîkhul-Islâm (on the life of the Prophet ﷺ). An important benefit of studying History is that it is necessary for the preservation of Hadîth. Thus the Muhaddith Ibn Hajr al-'Asqalânî says in Nukhbatul-Fikr, "Breaks in chains of narrators are discovered by knowing that the narrators did not meet. There is therefore a need to know History."

Mawlâna an-Nadwî narrates an example of the use of History to the 'âlim - the Jews produced a scroll of crumbling paper with writing in the old script. It claimed that Rasûlullâh ﷺ had exempted the Khaybar Jews from payment of Jizyah and was signed by Sa'd bin Mu'âth ؓ. 'Ulama unversed in History gave fatwâ that they should be exempted. Ibn Taymiyah however declared it a fake based on his knowledge of History - Sa'd died before the Battle of Khaybar so he could not have signed the treaty!

Allâh ﷻ Himself makes use of History to remind us of His favours. For example, Allah lists in the Qurân various favours He bestowed upon Banu Israel during their history.

يَٰبَنِيٓ إِسۡرَٰٓءِيلَ ٱذۡكُرُواْ نِعۡمَتِيَ

If one considers the number of historical events mentioned in the Qurân, one will realise that for a clear understanding of Tafsîr some knowledge of History is essential. The same also applies to understanding Hadith.

It can also be inferred from the Qurân that an important function of History is for us to take lessons and rectify ourselves. Thus Allâh often refers to past events by way of warning, for example:

أَلَمۡ يَأۡتِهِمۡ نَبَأُ ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبۡلِهِمۡ قَوۡمِ نُوحٖ وَعَادٖ وَثَمُودَ...

Has the news of those before you not reached you – the nation of Nû<u>h</u>, ʻÂd and Thamûd? [9:69]

The Prophets also adopted this approach and reminded their people of the past. Thus Shu'ayb عليه السلام said to his people,

وَيَٰقَوۡمِ لَا يَجۡرِمَنَّكُمۡ شِقَاقِيٓ أَن يُصِيبَكُم مِّثۡلُ مَآ أَصَابَ قَوۡمَ
نُوحٍ أَوۡ قَوۡمَ هُودٍ أَوۡ قَوۡمَ صَٰلِحٖۚ وَمَا قَوۡمُ لُوطٖ مِّنكُم بِبَعِيدٖ

O my people! Let not my opposition cause you to suffer a fate similar to that of the people of Hûd, Nû<u>h</u> or <u>S</u>âli<u>h</u> and the people of Lu<u>t</u> are not far off from you. [11:89]

The believer at Fir'awn's court also warned his people of past punishments,

وَقَالَ ٱلَّذِيٓ ءَامَنَ يَٰقَوۡمِ إِنِّيٓ أَخَافُ عَلَيۡكُم مِّثۡلَ يَوۡمِ ٱلۡأَحۡزَابِ
مِثۡلَ دَأۡبِ قَوۡمِ نُوحٖ وَعَادٖ وَثَمُودَ وَٱلَّذِينَ مِنۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡۚ ...

And the Believer said, "O my people! Verily I fear for you a fate like that which befell the groups. Like the fate of the people of Nûh, ʻAd, Thamûd and those who came after them..." [40:30]

These verses amply demonstrate the admonitory nature History is supposed to have on us, but unfortunately we rarely take heed of History.

One of the saddest events in the History of Islam is the loss of al-Andalus [now Spain and Portugal]. This was an Islâmic land with a majority Muslim population. The Muslims were defeated and Islâm banished until not a single Muslim remained in the land. Five hundred masâjid were converted into churches. All the causes for al-Andalus's collapse can be found amongst us

today - laziness for Jihâd; lack of inviting to Allâh; the Muslim governments not implementing Sharî'ah; drinking of wine; Muslims helping Christian armies against other Muslims etc. It is sad that we do not pay heed whereas our enemies study these events. VT Rajashekar, the editor of Dalit Voice noted, "Islam's ejection from Spain was a subject for keen study by the Hindu extremists in the 30's and the Muslims in India are totally ignorant of the History of Islamic decline in Spain and the events surrounding it." Will we wake up before disaster hits us too?

It is commonly acknowledged that by pondering over the Creation, recognition of the Creator is gained. Allâh ﷻ says:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱخْتِلَٰفِ ٱلَّيْلِ وَٱلنَّهَارِ لَأَيَٰتٍ لِّأُو۟لِى ٱلْأَلْبَٰبِ

Verily in the creation of the Heavens and Earth and in the alternating of night and day are signs for the ones of intelligence... [3:190]

However, few realise that Allâh ﷻ is free from time and space restrictions which are also creations. So time and its passage (i.e. History), if pondered over, is also a means of gaining His recognition if we ponder over Allâh's planning. Allâh ﷻ says,

يُدَبِّرُ ٱلْأَمْرَ مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ إِلَى ٱلْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُۥٓ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّونَ

He regulates every affair from the Heavens to the Earth then it goes up to Him in one day the length whereof is 1000 years of your reckoning. [32:5]

One tafsîr of this verse is that one thousand years before an event comes to pass Allâh ﷻ creates such things which eventually leads to its materialisation one thousand years later. Thus an examination of such events will make one realise that there is a Power higher than Man which controls events - that there is one All-Powerful Creator, Allâh.

Let us take half of one thousand years and examine how Allâh used the tribe of Khuzâ'ah for five centuries (525 years) to implement Rasûlullâh's ﷺ conquest of Makkah

In 120 A.D., the impending bursting of the great Marib Dam led to the dispersal of the Saba Nation of which three tribes (Aws, Khazraj and Banu 'Uthmân) headed for Yathrib (now Madînah). On the way, Banû 'Uthmân broke off from the other tribes and settled down in Marr azh-zhahrân and were hence named Khuzâ'ah (the seceders). Marr azh-zhahran was close to Makkah so Khuzâ'ah were in a position to conquer the Holy City and rule there for two hundred years. Qusayy, the chief of Quraysh, married Hubbâ bint Hulayl, daughter of the chief of Khuza'ah, and conquered Makkah in 440 A.D. Their son, 'Abd Manâf, was the next chief and then, after him, Hâshim bin 'Abd Manâf. A man named Nawfal usurped Hâshim's son, 'Abdul Muttalib, of his position and so Khuzâ'ah again entered Makkah's history and entered into alliance with Banû Hâshim in support of 'Abdul Muttalib whom they regarded as the grandson of their son, 'Abd Manâf.

According to the Treaty of Hudaybîyah which Rasûlullâh ﷺ signed with the Quraysh, each tribe could join the Muslims in alliance or they could join the Quraysh. Lineage played a great role in 'Arab politics and since Khuzâ'ah had close relations with Rasûlullâh ﷺ, the grandson of 'Abdul Muttalib, and were already allies of the tribe, Banû Hâshim, Khuzâ'ah joined the Muslims while their enemies, Banû Bakr, joined the Quraysh. In 8 Hijrî, Banû Bakr and Quraysh jointly attacked Khuzâ'ah thus breaking the treaty and so in a process that led back 525 years, Khuzâ'ah joined Rasûlullâh ﷺ to conquer Makkah in Ramadân 8 Hijrî. "And Allâh is the best of planners!"

Sulaymân al-Kindî (Translator)

21 Jumâdâ al-Ukhrâ 1423 A.H.

Discrepencies in translation

The reader's pardon is sought for any human errors which are bound to occur in translating this book. However, it must also be noted that different copies of ancient 'Arabic manuscripts often differ widely. This should be borne in mind when comparing the translation with 'Arabic originals, if differences are found. However, if any clear mistakes are found the translator would appreciate being informed thereof. The author's sparse chapter headings are unsuitable for an English book. The translator has therefore created chapters and divided the book into five parts at his own discretion.

Note of thanks

We firstly thank Allâh and then all else who assisted in any way in this translation. Special help was rendered by:

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10) Abû Muhammad
11) Nizhâm Rasîla

Al-Imâm al-Wâqidî

The author of this book is al-Imâm Abû 'Abdillâh Muhammad bin 'Umar al-Wâqidî al-Madanî who was born at the beginning of 130 Hijrî in al-Madînah al-Munawwarah. His surname is derived from his grandfather's name, Wâqid, and thus he became famous as al-Imâm al-Wâqidi. He began his

studies in Madînah. Amongst his prominent teachers were Ibn Abi Thahab Ma'mar bin Râshid, al-Imâm Mâlik bin Anas and al-Imâm Sufyân ath-Thawrî. Initially he earned a living as a wheat trader, but when a calamity struck he migrated to Irâq in 180 Hijrî during the reign of Mamûn ar-Rashîd. There Yahyâ al-Barmakî welcomed him due to his great learning and he was included as one of Mamûn's elite. He was soon appointed as judge and held this post until his death on 11 Thul Hijjah 207 Hijrî. He is buried in the graveyard of Khayzarân.

The Imâm was both a Muhaddith and Historian but since he concentrated on History, his hadîth narrations need to be scrutinised before acceptance whereas he is doubtlessly acknowledged as a master of History. Besides Futûhushâm, al-Imâm al-Wâqidî also wrote:

- Al-Maghâzî an-Nabawî (Campaigns of the Prophet ﷺ)
- Fath Ifriqîyah (Conquest of North Africa)
- Fath al-'Ajam (Conquest of Irân)
- Fath Misr wal-Iskandrîyah (Conquest of Egypt and Alexandria)
- Akhbâr Makkah (Narrations of Makkah)
- At-Tabaqât (The Generations)
- Futuh al-'Irâq (Conquest of Irâq)
- Sîrah Abî Bakr wal-Wafât (Life and death of Abû Bakr ؓ)
- Kitâb as-Sardah (Birth of the Prophet ﷺ)
- Tarîkh al-Fuqahâ (History of the Jurists)
- Kitâb al-Jamal (Battle of the Camel)
- Kitâb as-Siffîn (Battle of Siffîn)
- Maqtal al-Husayn (Massacre of Al-Husayn ؓ)
- Tafsîr al-Qurân etc.

Ash-Shâm

The word 'Syria' as used in this book refers not to the area of the modern republic, but to the larger ancient region called 'ash-Sham' in 'Arabic. It bears great significance in Islâm viz. the Qurân calls it a 'Blessed Land.' In it is al-Masjid al-Aqsâ; it is home to more Prophets than any other land; many Prophets are buried there, such as Ibrâhîm عليه السلام; many Sahâbah are buried there, such as Mu'âwiyah رضي الله عنه; Syrian 'Ulamâ are countless, for example, al-Imâm an-Nawawî. Syria has produced many great warriors (as-Sultân Nûruddîn) and martyrs (ash-Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Azzâm). 'Îsâ عليه السلام will descend in Damascus and have his capital at Baytul Muqaddas; ad-Dajjâl will be slain at Lud; the Abdâl (a special group of saints) are mostly found in Syria; and Syria is the Place of Gathering for Judgement Day.

'Arabic benedictions appearing after names

ﷺ *sallallâhu 'alayhi wa sallam,* Allâh's salutations and peace be upon him i.e. the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

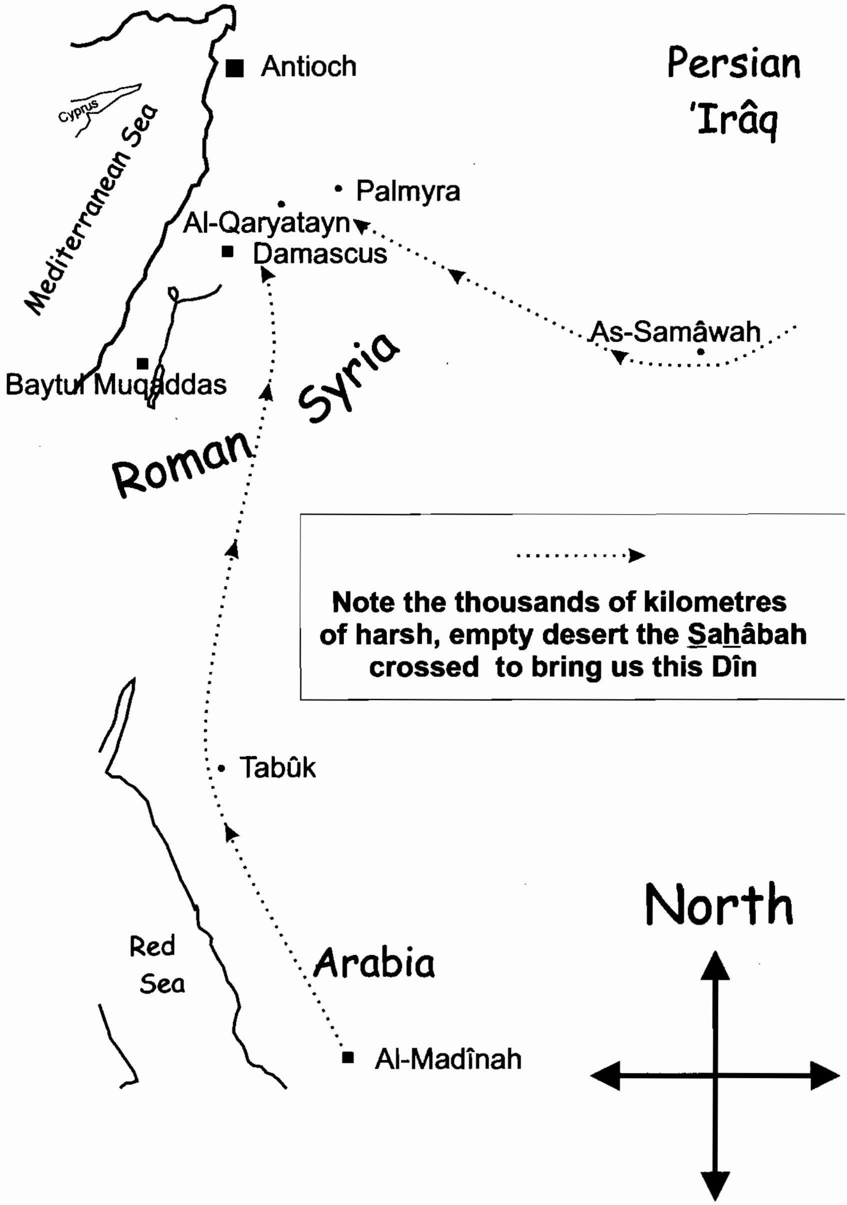
عليه السلام *'alayhis salâm,* peace be upon him (a prophet or angel)

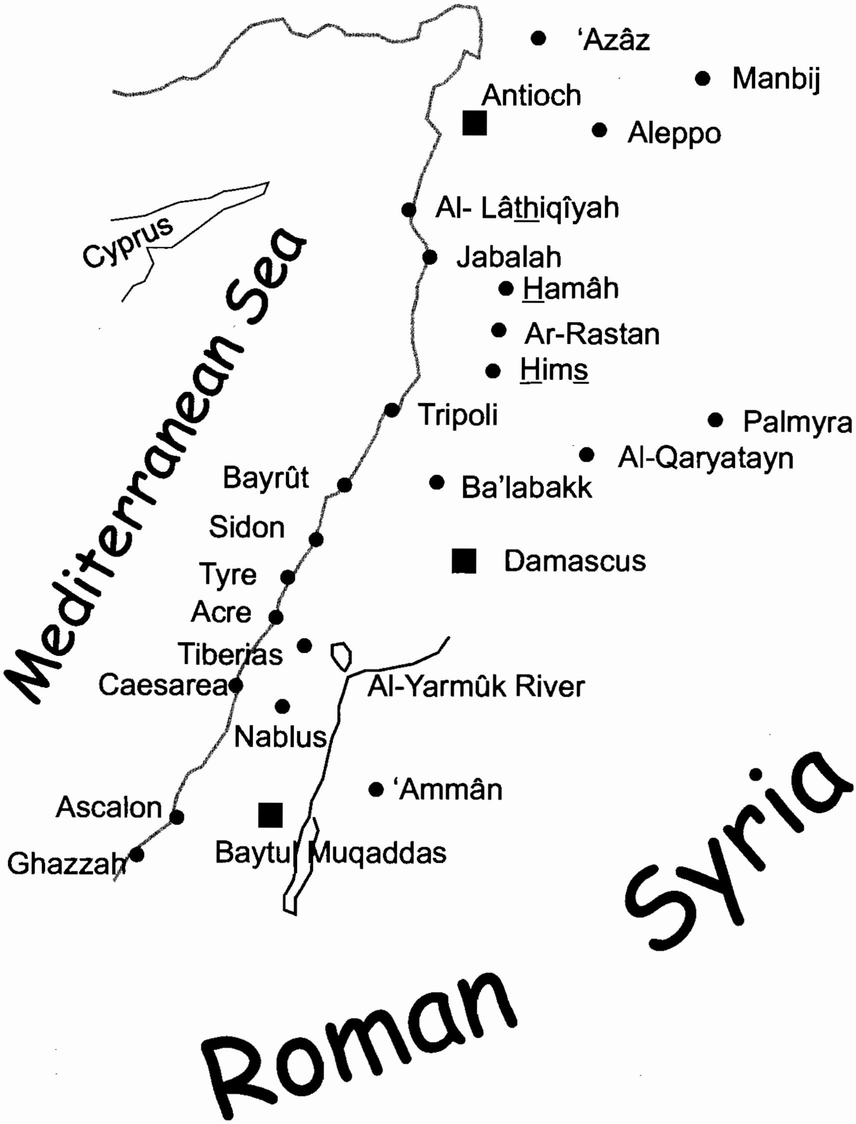
رضي الله عنه *radiyallâhu 'anhu,* may Allâh be pleased with him (a sahâbî)

رضي الله عنهم *radiyallâhu 'anhum,*may Allâh be pleased with them (sahâbah)

Dedication

O Allâh! If this book finds acceptance in Your Court then convey the reward of it to the soul of Abû Basîr رضي الله عنه and to the souls of all pious believers of the Kindah tribe.


Antioch
Persian
'Irâq
Cyprus
Mediterranean Sea
Palmyra
Al-Qaryatayn
Damascus
As-Samâwah
Baytul Muqaddas
Roman
Syria
Note the thousands of kilometres of harsh, empty desert the Sahâbah crossed to bring us this Dîn
Tabûk
Red Sea
Arabia
Al-Madînah
North


'Azâz
Manbij
Antioch
Aleppo
Al- Lâthiqîyah
Cyprus
Jabalah
Hamâh
Ar-Rastan
Hims
Mediterranean Sea
Tripoli
Palmyra
Al-Qaryatayn
Bayrût
Ba'labakk
Sidon
Damascus
Tyre
Acre
Tiberias
Caesarea
Al-Yarmûk River
Nablus
'Ammân
Ascalon
Ghazzah
Baytul Muqaddas
Syria
Roman

Contents

Part 1

Damascus

1) Prelude

Abû Bakr bin Ahmad narrates from ’Umar bin ’Uthmân bin ’Abdurahmân, Nawfal bin Muhammad, Muhammad bin ’Abdillâh bin Muhammad, Rabî’ah bin ’Uthmân, Yûnus bin Muhammad, Mâin bin Yahyâ bin ‘Abdillâh, Muhammad bin ‘Umar ar-Râfiqî, Mu’âth bin Muhammad al-Ansâri, Abdurahmân bin Abdil-Azîz, Abdullâh bin Majîd *et al*:

Rasûlullâh ﷺ passed away and Abû Bakr ؓ became the Khalîfah. Abû Bakr ؓ eliminated the false prophets, Musaylamah and Shujâ‘ Wâlûd, while Tulayhah fled to Syria. He conquered Yamâhah and destroyed Banû Hanîfa and the ‘Arabs submitted to him. The Khalîfah then resolved to invade Syria and fight the Romans. Hence, he gathered the Sahabah ؓ and said, “O people, may Allâh have mercy upon you. Remember that Allâh has blessed you with Islâm, made you the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ, increased your Faith and Conviction and granted you complete victory. He has said:

...ٱلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِى وَرَضِيتُ
لَكُمُ ٱلْإِسْلَٰمَ دِينًا ...

Today I have perfected for you your religion and completed my favour unto you and have chosen Islâm for you as a religion...

[5:3]

Know that Rasûlullâh ﷺ intended to wage Jihâd in Syria and desired that effort should be made in that direction but then Allâh recalled him to Himself. So be clear

on this point, that I intend sending a Muslim army together with their families and dependants to Syria. Rasûlullâh ﷺ told me before his demise,

'I was shown the Earth and saw its East and West and that my Ummah would soon conquer whatever I was shown.'

So you should all come to an agreement and express your opinion to me. May Allâh have mercy upon you."

The Sahabah ؓ unanimously replied, "O Khalîfah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, we are under your command. We are prepared for whatever you order because Allâh has made it incumbent upon us to obey you by saying:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ أَطِيعُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا۟ ٱلرَّسُولَ وَأُو۟لِى ٱلْأَمْرِ مِنكُمْ ...

Obey Allâh and obey the Messenger and those in authority over you... [4:59]

2) Abû Bakr ؓ summons the Yamanîs for Jihâd

Abû Bakr ؓ was very pleased with this reply and therefore wrote to the kings of Yaman, the 'Arab chiefs and the people of Makkah:

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

From : 'Abdullâh al - 'Atîq bin Abî Quhâfah.

To : All Muslims.

As-salâmu 'Alaykum.

All Praise to Allâh alone and salutations to His Messenger. Know that I intend sending an army to Syria to expel the Disbelievers and those who do not tread the straight path from

there. Whoever amongst you intends to wage Jihâd should hasten to obey Allâh and make preparations for Allâh says:

ٱنفِرُواْ خِفَافًا وَثِقَالاً وَجَـٰهِدُواْ بِأَمۡوَٲلِڪُمۡ وَأَنفُسِكُمۡ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ ...

Go forth lightly armed or heavily armed and wage Jihâd with your wealth and lives in the path of Allâh... [9:41]

Abû Bakr ﷺ gave these letters to Anas bin Mâlik ﷺ, the attendant of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, and awaited their reply.

Jâbir bin 'Abdillâh ﷺ narrates:

Anas ﷺ returned after a short while with the glad tidings that the people of Yaman were coming. He told Abû Bakr ﷺ, "Whoever I read your order out to immediately obeyed Allâh and accepted your order. These people will present themselves with their equipment and war materials and armour. O Khalîfah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, I have presented myself ahead of their coming to give you glad tidings. In obeying you they accept having their hair dishevelled and their bodies covered in dust. They are extremely brave and excellent horsemen – the chiefs of Yaman. They will soon be arriving with their families and dependants. You should prepare to meet them."

Abû Bakr ﷺ was extremely pleased to hear this.

The next day, signs of the coming of the Mujâhidîn were seen and so the people of al-Madînah informed him. Abû Bakr ﷺ ordered them to mount their conveyances and went with them out of al-Madînah to welcome the arrivals.

Soon legion after legion of Mujâhidîn arrived, each tribe with their emblems and with their flags in their hands happily marching behind each other. The first Yamanî tribe to come was Himyar, wearing good armour and carrying expensive swords or Arab bows. Their chief, Thul Kalâ' al-Himayrî ﷺ, was wearing a turban. He approached Abû Bakr ﷺ, greeted him, identified his abode and tribe and then recited the following poem:

أتتك حمير بالأهلين والولد   أهل السوابق والعالون بالرتبِ
أسد غطارفة شوس عمالقة   يردوا الكماة غدًا في الحرب بالقضب
الحرب عادتنا والضرب همّتنا   وذو الكلاع دعا في الأهل والنسب

Himyar is my tribe, and these people you see
Are first in battle and high in genealogy.
Lions of bravery, in courage they are leaders.
With curved blades they strike great armed warriors.
Our habit is battle, firm whether we kill or fall
Thul Kalâ al-Himayrî is commander of all.
Our army has come and on the Roman Empire is our sight
Syria will be made home with our might.
For us is Damascus.
We will fling her people into an abyss!

Hearing this, Abû Bakr ؓ smiled and said to 'Âlî ؓ, "Abû al-Hasan, have you not heard Rasûlûllah ﷺ saying, 'When the Himayr come with their women carrying their children then rejoice at Allâh's help for the Muslims against all Polytheists.' "

'Âlî ؓ replied, "You have spoken the truth. I have indeed heard Rasûlullâh ﷺ saying this."

Anas ؓ narrates:

When the Himayr passed by with all their families, dependants, provisions and equipment, the Mathhij tribe came after them. They were riding extremely fine, expensive horses and carried sharp spears in their hands. Their leader, Qays bin Hubayrah al-Murâdî approached Abû Bakr ؓ, introduced himself and his tribe and then recited this poem:

أتتك كتائب منا سراعاً   ذوو التيجان أعني من مرادِ
فقدمنا أمامك كي ترانا   نبيد القوم بالسيف النجادي

Our Army hastened unto thee,
Kings of Murâd are we,
We have come so that you can see,
How we kill Romans with the swords we carry.

Abû Bakr ﷺ made du'â for them and they went ahead. The tribe of Tayy came next. Their chief, Habis bin Saîd at-Tâî, wanted to dismount and walk to the Khalîfah. Abû Bakr ﷺ took an oath and prevented him from doing so. When Habis came near they greeted and shook hands and Abû Bakr ﷺ thanked them. Next came an enormous contingent of the tribe of Azd under the command of Jundub bin 'Amr ad-Dawsî. Amongst them was Abû Hurayrah ﷺ carrying a bow and quiver. Abû Bakr ﷺ burst out laughing upon seeing him like this and asked, "Why have you come? You do not know the art of warfare!"

Abû Hurayrah ﷺ replied, "Firstly, I wish to participate in the reward of Jihâd, and secondly, if Allâh wills, I will get to eat Syrian fruits!"

Abû Bakr ﷺ laughed a lot at this reply.

After this, Banû 'Abs arrived under the command of Maysarah bin Masrûq al-'Absî followed by the Kinânah under Fathm bin Ashyam al-Kinânî. All the tribes of Yaman who came brought their children, wealth, women, horses and camels etc. along with them. Abû Bakr ﷺ was very happy to see this display and thanked Allâh.

The tribes encamped separately around al-Madînah. Since the army had become numerous, food and space became insufficient. Food supplies became low and there was difficulty in finding grain and pasturage for the horses. Their chiefs therefore consulted each other and decided to ask the Khalîfah to despatch them to Syria due to the problem of overcrowding at al-Madînah. They went to him, made salâm and sat down. They then looked at each other wondering who would speak first until eventually Qays bin Hubayrah said, "O Khalîfah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, you summoned us to a task to which we responded immediately in obedience to Allâh and His Rasûl ﷺ and out of eagerness for Jihâd. Through Allâh's grace our army is prepared and all war provisions made. However, our troops are undergoing difficulty since your city cannot accommodate all the horses, mules and camels, nor are all the men's needs fulfilled. We therefore request you to either permit us to fight, or if the decision for war has been cancelled, then permit us to return to our homeland."

In this way each chief in his turn expressed the same idea. Upon hearing them all, Abû Bakr ﷺ replied, "By Allâh! I had no intention of giving you difficulty. I merely desired that all the contingents should arrive so that the army's numbers should be completed."

They said, "There remains no tribe still to come. All have arrived. Therefore place your trust in Allâh and send us."

3) Battle of Tabûk

Upon hearing this, Abû Bakr ﷺ immediately arose and walked to the Mujâhidîn camp outside al-Madînah. 'Umar, 'Uthmân, 'Ali, Sa'îd bin Zayd bin 'Amr bin Nufayl, the tribes of Aws and Khazraj ﷺ and others accompanied him. Upon seeing him the Mujâhidîn rejoiced and welcomed him with shouts of "Allâhu Akbar!" Their shouts filled the sky and were so loud and numerous that they echoed off the mountains so that the very mountains replied, "Allâhu Akbar!" to the shouts of the Mujâhidîn. The Khalîfah climbed an elevation from where he gazed at the waves of ranks which covered every inch of the earth. His face glittered with happiness and he prayed, "O Allâh, grant them patience. Help them. Do not make them prisoners in the claws of the Disbelievers."

After this du'â he called Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ and gave him a battalion flag and command over 1,000 horsemen. Thereafter, he gave a flag to al-Hijâz's famous horseman, Rabî'ah bin 'Amir ﷺ of Banû 'Amir tribe, also making him commander of 1,000 horsemen. Then he said to Yazîd ﷺ, "Rabî'ah bin 'Amir is a man of great status and nobility. Be acquainted with his bravery and methods of attack. I place him under you, but you are to place him in every advance group. Consult with him and act upon his consultation. Do not oppose his opinion."

Yazîd ﷺ replied, "I readily accept all this."

Yazîd ﷺ and Rabî'ah ﷺ came on horseback at the head of the two armies to take leave of Abû Bakr ﷺ who went on foot with them. Yazîd ﷺ said, "O Khalîfah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, I fear Allâh and feel ashamed before Him that we ride while you walk. Either mount or let us walk." He replied, "Neither will I ride, nor will you dismount. I hope for reward from Allâh by means of this walk."

Thus he marched until Thanîyatul Wadâ' where he stopped. Yazîd ﷺ came and said, "O Khalîfah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, please advise us."

Abû Bakr ؓ said, "When you leave a place do not cause the men difficulty in marching. Do not punish your men harshly. Consult them in every matter. Do not abandon justice and stay far from injustice and tyranny because no tyrant nation has ever obtained success nor been victorious over another nation. Act upon the Qurân's dictate:

إِذَا لَقِيتُمُ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ زَحْفًا فَلَا تُوَلُّوهُمُ ٱلْأَدْبَارَ وَمَن يُوَلِّهِمْ
يَوْمَئِذٍ دُبُرَهُۥٓ إِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِّقِتَالٍ أَوْ مُتَحَيِّزًا إِلَىٰ فِئَةٍ فَقَدْ بَآءَ
بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ

When you meet those who disbelieve in a battlefield, never turn your backs to them (i.e. flee). And whoever turns his back to them on such a day – unless it be a strategy of war, or a retreat to (his own) troops – has indeed drawn upon himself the wrath of Allâh... [8:16-17]

That is to say, when you encounter the army of Disbelievers then do not flee for whoever flees, loses the battle. When you have obtained victory do not slay any small children, old people, women or pre-adolescents. Do not approach the harvests of trees. Crops should not be burnt nor fruit trees cut. Do not slaughter any animal which is impermissible. Do not break any agreement which you make with the enemy and after peace do not tear up your treaties. Remember that you will also meet such people who have undertaken monasticism in their monasteries, thinking this to be for the sake of Allâh. Do not interfere with them for as long as as they choose this isolationism – do not destroy their monasteries and do not kill them.

You will also meet such a Satanic people who worship the Cross. They shave their heads in the middle to expose their skulls. Cut off their heads until they accept Islâm or pay Jizyah disgraced. Now I place you in Allâh's hands, may He protect you."

He then shook hands and embraced Yazîd ؓ and then shook hands with Rabî'ah ؓ saying, "Rabî'ah bin 'Amir, show your bravery and intelligence in fighting the Romans. May Allâh fulfil all your desires and forgive us all."

The Islâmic army then went towards its destination while Abû Bakr ﷺ and his companions returned to al-Madînah. After reaching a short distance outside al-Madînah, Yazîd ﷺ increased his pace. Rabî'ah ﷺ objected, "Abû Bakr ordered you to go slowly without causing difficulty."

Yazîd ﷺ : It is true that he commanded this, but just as he despatched us, he intends despatching other armies too. I intend reaching Syria first so that by the time the others reach us we may have gained some victories. There are three benefits in this - firstly, Allâh and his Rasûl's ﷺ pleasure; secondly, the Khalîfah will be happy; thirdly, booty will be obtained if Allâh wills.

Rabi'ah ﷺ : As you please. All power and might belong to Allâh.

So they took the secondary road of Wâdiyul Qurâ so as to reach Damascus by way of Tabûk and al-Jâbiyah.

Christian 'Arabs living in al-Madînah gave intelligence of this invasion to the Roman Emperor, Heraclius. He assembled the Imperial officials and said, "O Romans, know that your Empire, wealth and lives are facing impending destruction. For as long as you maintained the laws of the Gospel, you defeated whichever king attacked you and your dominations in Syria. You will recall that Kisrâ attacked you with the Persian army but had to flee in defeat. The Turks also attacked you but were similarly defeated. The Jarâmiqah invaded but you drove them back. Now you have brought about changes and innovations in your religion and chosen the path of tyranny. You have now become criminals in the Eyes of God and in retribution He is sending such a people against you who are of no note or rank. No nation was regarded as weaker than them so it never occurred to us that they would dare to attack us in our own territories. Actually it is nothing but famine and hunger which has driven them to us and their Prophet's successor has sent them to snatch our lands and drive us out."

Heraclius then told them whatever the spies had told him, to which the Imperial officials unanimously replied, "Send us against them and they will never fulfil their desires. We will drive them back to their Prophet's city, demolish their Ka'bah, uproot its foundation and not spare a single one of them."

When Heraclius observed their eager faces, weighed their plans against caution and resolution and found them ready, he chose a cavalry of 8,000 daring and brave men. Over them he appointed four great experienced commanders - Batlic; his brother Sergius; Chief of Police, Luke son of Samuel; and the Governor of Ghazzah and Ascalon, Salya. These four were the epitome of bravery and intelligence. They put

on their armour, prepared their goods and displayed their adornment. The Chief Priest then prayed for their victory and assistance, "O God! Help whichever party is on the Truth."

Incense was burned in the churches and holy water sprinkled over them. Caesar himself came to bid them farewell and so they left following Christian 'Arab guides.

Yâsir bin Husayn narrates:

Yâzîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ reached Tabûk three days before the Romans. On the fourth day, the Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ intended to advance but saw dust rising in the distance. Allâh then inspired them with a clever strategy. Yâzîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ ordered Rabî'ah bin 'Âmir ﷺ to hide in ambush with 1,000 men while he himself led 1,000 to face the enemy and drew them in rows. He gave some advice and mentioned Allâh's favours, then said, "Remember that Allâh has promised you victory in most places. He has sent angels to your aid and says in the Qurân:

كَم مِّن فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ ۗ
وَٱللَّهُ مَعَ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ

How often a small group overcame a mighty force by Allâh's leave? And Allâh is with the patient ones. [2:249]

Our Master, Rasûlullâh ﷺ, said that Paradise lies under the shadow of swords. O my brothers, the very first army to make Jihâd against the Romans is this very army of yours. Whichever Muslim army may come to join you will come to help you while you remain the original force. So it is required of you to display that which the Muslims are expecting of you. The enemy is confronting you, therefore be careful that they do not have hopes of killing you. Help Allâh's Dîn and He will help you."

While Yâzîd ﷺ was advising them, the Roman vanguard, followed by the main body arrived. Seeing a small 'Arab force, they thought this to be the entire 'Arab army. They shouted and said to each other, "Encircle those who have come intending to snatch your Empire, dishonour you and slay your kings. Draw help from the Cross so that it may come to your assistance." They then attacked.

The Sahâbah responded with great courage and thus the battle began and endured for some time. The Romans gained the upper hand due to their greater number and thought that they would capture the Muslims, when suddenly Rabî'ah and his men emerged riding 'Arab horses. They loudly recited salutations on Rasûlullâh and shouted "Allâhu Akbar!" as if they were thundering clouds. Rabî'ah attacked fiercely and the banner of Tawheed was raised. As soon as the Romans saw the ambush they lost courage and Allâh placed such terror in their hearts that they broke rank and fled. Batlic was encouraging his men to continue fighting when Rabî'ah spotted him and deduced from his demeanour that he was a commander of the army. With great daring, he speared the Roman with such force that the spear penetrated him through one side and emerged from the other. When the Romans saw him fall unconscious, they recklessly fled and abandoned the battlefield to the Sahâbah .

'Abdullâh bin Hilm narrates:

Allâh destroyed 2,200 Romans in this battle while 120 Muslims were martyred, mostly from the Yamâni tribe, Sakâsik.

Sergius addressed the defeated Romans, "How can I show my face to Caesar Heraclius when the audacity of a small Muslim force has destroyed our great champions. Our blood stains the Earth and our corpses lie in heaps. I cannot return until I either avenge my brother or join him in death." Hearing this the Romans began rebuking each other and returned to save face. They erected their tents, arranged their equipment and prepared for a fierce fight. When all the equipment was arranged and the camp firmly entrenched, a Christian 'Arab, Qadh bin Wâthilah, was called and told, "Go to the Muslim camp and tell them to send a wise, intelligent and experienced man to us so that we may ask him what their goal is."

Qadh reached the Muslims on a light-paced horse. When some Aws tribesmen saw him, a stranger in their midst, they asked, "What do you want here?" He replied, "Our commander of the army calls for one of your wise and experienced men so that he may investigate why you have interfered in Imperial affairs."

Rabî'ah : I will go.

Yâzîd : Rabî'ah, it is not appropriate for you to go since you killed one of their great officers in yesterday's battle.

Rabî'ah : Allâh says in the Qurân:

قُل لَّن يُصِيبَنَآ إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ ٱللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَىٰنَا ۚ وَعَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ

Say: Nothing will afflict us except that which Allâh has decreed for us. He is our Protector. [9:51]

I advise you and the Muslims to closely observe me. If I attack the Romans because they betray me, then fight them too.

He then mounted his horse and, bidding the Muslims salâm, made for the enemy camp. When he came near the enemy tents, Qadh said, "Honour the Imperial army by dismounting."

Rabî'ah ﷺ replied, "I am not someone who leaves honour and chooses disgrace. It can never happen that I hand over my horse to anyone else. I will not dismount at any place except the tent entrance. If this is not acceptable to you then I will fight you because you are the ones who called us – we sent no message to you whatsoever."

Qadh informed the Romans of this. They consulted each other and said, "The 'Arabs are firm and true in their word. Let him come as he pleases." Thus he came mounted right up to the tents where he dismounted and, with the horse's bridle in his hand, sat down cross-legged.

Sergius : My dear brother 'Arab, we have always considered you to be weak. It never occurred to us that we would be fighting each other and that you would in fact attack us. What is it that you want?

Rabî'ah ﷺ : We desire that you accept our Dîn and be reciters of the same Declaration which we recite. If not, then you will have to pay Jizyah. If you have a problem with that also, then the sword is the best decider.

Sergius : What harm is there if instead you go and attack the Persians? We should make peace and befriend each other.

Rabî'ah ﷺ : Compared to you Persia is further off and Allâh has commanded us:

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ قَـٰتِلُوا۟ ٱلَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُم مِّنَ ٱلْكُفَّارِ وَلْيَجِدُوا۟ فِيكُمْ غِلْظَةً

Fight those Disbelievers who are nearest to you and let them find you harsh against them. [9:123]

Sergius : What! Has a book been revealed to you?

Rabî'ah ﷺ : Just as the Gospel was revealed to your Prophet.

Sergius : Perhaps we could make peace on these terms – we will give each of your men one dînâr and a camel-load of grain; for your commander 100 dînâr and 100 camel-loads of grain. We will sign a peace treaty to the effect that you will not fight us nor will we fight you.

Rabî'ah ﷺ : This can never be. I have already stated that your first choice is Islâm, second Jizyah, third the sword.

Sergius : We can never leave our religion and become Muslims since we do not consider any religion better than ours, and to die is better than paying you Jizyah. You cannot know how to fight better than us, for in our army are sons of Roman generals and Amalakites, men of the battlefield, all experts in both sword and spear.

He then called for a priest named Sicilia to come and debate with 'this bedouin'.

4) Romans annihilated

Caesar Heraclius had sent a priest with the army who was knowledgeable in religion and debate. When he came Sergius said, "O holy father, question this man as to his religion and then tell us what you think."

Priest : O 'Arab brother, it is written in our Scriptures that God will send an 'Arab prophet from the Hâshimî family of the Quraysh tribe whose sign of recognition will be that God will summon him to the Heavens. Did this happen to your prophet?

Rabî'ah ﷺ : Allâh did indeed summon our Prophet ﷺ to the Heavens and has mentioned in the Qurân:

سُبْحَٰنَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِۦ لَيْلًا مِّنَ ٱلْمَسْجِدِ ٱلْحَرَامِ إِلَى
ٱلْمَسْجِدِ ٱلْأَقْصَا ٱلَّذِى بَٰرَكْنَا حَوْلَهُۥ لِنُرِيَهُۥ مِنْ ءَايَٰتِنَآ ...

Pure is that Being who took his slave on a night journey from the Sacred Masjid (in Makkah) to the Furthest Masjid (in Jerusalem) whose precincts we have blessed so that We may show him Our signs. [17:1]

Priest : It is in the Scriptures that it will be compulsory for that Prophet and his followers to fast one month of the year called 'Ramad̲ân'.

Rabî'ah ﷺ : That is also correct. One month of fasting has been made compulsory upon us as mentioned in the Qurân:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أُنزِلَ فِيهِ ٱلْقُرْءَانُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَٰتٍ مِّنَ
ٱلْهُدَىٰ وَٱلْفُرْقَانِ ...

Ramad̲ân is that month in which the Qurân was revealed. It is a guidance for humanity and distinguishes between truth and falsehood... [2:185]

In another place He says:

Fasting has been prescribed upon you just as it was prescribed upon those before you. [2:183]

Priest : We have also read in our Scriptures that if one of his followers performs a good deed, then the reward of ten good deeds is written for him. Whereas if he commits an evil, only one is written down against him.

Rabî'ah ﷺ : The Qurân explains it like this:

مَن جَآءَ بِٱلۡحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُۥ عَشۡرُ أَمۡثَالِهَا ۖ وَمَن جَآءَ بِٱلسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا
تُجۡزَىٰٓ إِلَّا مِثۡلَهَا وَهُمۡ لَا يُظۡلَمُونَ

He who performs good receives ten the like thereof and he who performs evil is only accountable for the like thereof and they will not be wronged. [6:160]

Priest : It is written that God orders his followers to send salutation upon him.

Rabî'ah ﷺ : Yes, He has ordered it in these words:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ وَمَلَٰٓئِكَتَهُۥ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى ٱلنَّبِيِّ ۚ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟
صَلُّوا۟ عَلَيۡهِ وَسَلِّمُوا۟ تَسۡلِيمًا

Allâh and His Angels send salutation upon His Prophet. O you who believe convey salutations and greetings of peace upon him. [33:56]

The priest was amazed to hear this answer and said to the commander of the army, "Truth is with these people."

After this dialogue, a courtier told Sergius, "This is the bedouin who killed your brother yesterday."

Upon hearing this, Sergius blazed with rage until his eyes turned red with fury and he intended to assault Rabî'ah ﷺ. Rabî'ah ﷺ however realised his intention and got up with lightning speed. He grabbed a sword and struck Sergius with such force that he fell to the ground. The Romans charged at him, so he jumped onto his horse shouting, "Is there any challenger?" and faced them for combat.

Yâzîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ saw the battle and shouted, "O Muslims, the enemy has betrayed a Companion of your Prophet ﷺ. Attack at once!" The Muslims attacked and the two forces were completely interlocked. The Romans were firmly holding their battle stations when suddenly a second Muslim force under Shurahbîl bin

H̲asanah ﷺ, the scribe of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, arrived. When the Muslims saw their brothers coming, their spirits rose and they fought so zealously that their swords were in a constant meeting with enemy heads. Out of the 8,000 Romans, not a single one survived. Tabûk was far from Syria so the 'Arabs were able to pursue and slay them all and capture all their wealth, Turkish horses, tents and treasure. They met Shurah̲bîl and his companions and exchanged salâm and du'â. After erecting camp, Shurah̲bîl ﷺ consulted Yâzîd and Rabî'ah ﷺ about the booty and the two agreed, "All booty captured from the Romans should be sent to the Khalîfah so that the Muslims may see it. This will encourage them to participate in Jihâd and send their troops here."

Shaddâd bin Aws ﷺ and 500 horsemen took all the booty, except for weapons and war equipment, to the Khalîfah. The remaining troops stayed at Tabûk awaiting the arrival of more Muslim armies.

When the Muslims of al-Madînah saw Shaddâd bin Aws ﷺ arriving with the booty, they raised cries of, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbâr!"

Abû Bâkr ﷺ enquired as to the shouting. They replied, "Shaddâd has returned with booty."

In the meantime, Shaddâd ﷺ and his men came, dismounted and went to the Masjid to perform Tah̲îyatul Masjîd and offer salâm at the grave of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. They then went to Abû Bâkr ﷺ to give him the good news and related the whole incident with the Romans. Abû Bâkr ﷺ prostrated out of thanks and considered this to be a good omen. He used the booty to prepare another Muslim army and wrote to the people of Makkah to encourage them to participate in Jihâd.

5) Abû Bâkr ﷺ summons the people of Makkah for Jihâd

In the name of Allâh, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

From : 'Abdullâh al-'Atîq bin Abî Quh̲âfah

To : The people of Sacred Makkah and surrounds.

As-Salâmu 'Alaykum

All praise belongs to Allâh alone and salutation be to His Messenger. I have prepared to wage Jihâd on the enemies of the

Muslims and to conquer Syria. I am informing you of this so that you may immediately comply with Allâh's command:

انفِرُوا خِفَافًا وَثِقَالًا وَجَٰهِدُوا بِأَمْوَٰلِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ
اللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

Go forth lightly armed or heavily armed and wage Jihâd with your wealth and lives in the path of Allâh. That is better for you if only you knew. [9:41]

This verse was revealed in your city, so you are more responsible than others to comply. Whoever shows himself true by implementing this is the best person. Whoever assists the Dîn of Allâh will be assisted by Allâh. As for him who remains aloof from this task, Allâh does not care for him. Race towards a Paradise filled with grape-vines prepared by Allâh for the Mujâhidîn, Muhâjirîn, and Ansâr etc.

Sufficient is Allâh for us, and what an excellent Disposer of affairs He is!

He stamped it with Rasûlullâh's ﷺ seal and sent it with 'Abdullâh bin Huthâfah ؓ to Makkah. When Ibn Huthâfah ؓ reached Makkah he shouted loudly. When the people had gathered around him, he read it aloud. Suhayl bin Amr, Harith bin Hishâm and 'Ikramah bin Abi Jahl ؓ stood up and said, "We accept the invitation of he who calls to Allâh and His Rasûl and accept the word of Rasûlullâh ﷺ as true."

Harith and 'Ikramah ؓ then said, "By Allâh, we will definitely help His Dîn. Why do we lag behind others? While it is true that they have overtaken us by reaching their goal before us and we have been deprived of that great virtue, at least we can have our names included with theirs by joining them."

'Ikramah ؓ took fourteen men from his tribe, Makhzûm, while Suhayl bin 'Amr ؓ went with forty youths from Banû 'Âmir, including Harith bin Hishâm. Others from

Makkah joined them until they became an army of 500 going to al-Madinâh. Abû Bâkr ﷺ wrote to the Hawâzin and Thafîq tribes who sent 400 men to al-Madinâh.

'Abdullâh bin Saîd narrates from Abû 'Âmir:

We were in Tâif when 400 men of Hawâzin and Thafîq immediately responded upon reading Abû Bâkr's ﷺ letter. On the way we met the men from Makkah so that we became a total of 900. Each of us said, "I am enough to confront 900 Roman horsemen all on my own."

When we arrived at al-Madinâh, we encamped at Baqî'. Abû Bâkr ﷺ was informed and he ordered, "Leave your camp and go straight to where your brothers, Shurahbîl bin Hasanah, Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân and Rabî'ah bin 'Amir, are."

At that time, they were all waiting at the border. Upon reaching them, we waited there for twenty days during which time other delegations came and joined us.

Shaddâd bin Aws ﷺ narrates:

Abû Bâkr ﷺ came one day with a few Muhâjirîn and Ansâr and gave a befitting speech while standing. After praising Allâh and sending salutation on Rasûlullâh ﷺ he said, "O people, amongst the obligations which Allâh has decreed upon the Muslims is Jihâd, the reward for which is very great in the Eyes of Allâh. Purify your intentions and have only good desires so that your rewards may increase. O slaves of Allâh, hasten to fulfil the obligation of your Rabb and the Sunnah of your True Guide. There can only be one of two outcomes to the endeavour upon which you embark – victory or martyrdom. Whoever is martyred will meet those who have died before him and his reward is upon Allâh!"

'Abdullah bin Saîd narrates:

I said to Abû 'Âmir, "Describe Abû Bâkr."

He said, "He had a wheatish-coloured complexion, thin tall body and his beard was not very thick."

Abû 'Âmir narrates:

400 men came from Hadramawt also.

Abû Bâkr ﷺ sent a letter to Usayd bin Salamah al-Kilâbî and Banû Kilâb summoning them to partake in the Jihâd against Rome. Dahhak bin Sufyân bin Awf ﷺ stood to address the gathered tribe, "O Banû Kilâb, make fear of Allâh your distinguishing sign and respond to the summons of the Khalifâh by coming to the assistance of the Dîn of Muhammad ﷺ."

An old man who had travelled several times to Syria stood up and said, "O Dahhak, you encourage us to fight such people who have prestige, power, implements of war and innumerable horses. How can the 'Arabs find the strength to fight them when we are few, hungry and weak?"

Dahhak replied, "The victories of Rasûlullâh ﷺ were not based on numbers or implements of war but on raising the Word of Allâh which is the actual reason why he was sent. You will probably recall that at Badr, Rasûlullâh ﷺ had only 313 men against the Quraysh who had a numerous army, implements of war, horses, countless weapons and were short of nothing. For as long as he remained on Earth, victory and conquest were always his. Now look at his Khalifâh, Abû Bâkr ﷺ. You saw how, as soon as he was appointed, he defeated the Apostates with the sword. Remember that for as long as you do not help the Muslims, as Himyar and Tayy are doing, you will never have respect in the eyes of the Khalîfah and the Muslims. By Allâh! Do not disgrace yourselves amongst the 'Arabs. You have more horses and camels than other 'Arabs, not to mention the number of armies and weapons. Fear Allâh and obey the Khalîfah's order immediately."

This speech roused Banû Kilâb who hastened to al-Madinâh mounted on camels. They also brought other camels to be used as beasts of burden and had 'Arab horses. They entered al-Madinâh wearing their weapons. At that time Abû Bâkr ﷺ was coming out to send off an army to Syria. He was very glad to see them and ordered them to join the rest of the army. He presented the flag to Dahhak bin Sufyân ﷺ who in turn presented him with horses and camels he had brought with him to be used against Rome. Abû Bâkr ﷺ was happy to see all the horses reddish-white and said, "I have heard Rasûlullâh ﷺ say that the horses of Yaman have white legs."

The gathering army caused a noise and commotion. The children of the Muhâjirîn and Ansâr joined them, resulting in a huge force assembling at Jurf. Abû Bâkr ﷺ appointed Abû 'Ubaydah bin Jarrâh ﷺ as Commander-in-Chief. An honourable youth, Sa'îd bin Khâlid bin Sa'îd bin al-'Âs ﷺ, had complained to Abû Bâkr ﷺ, "When you intended to appoint my father, an officer in your army, as commander of the Reconnaissance, the Muslims objected and so you dismissed him although he had dedicated himself to the Path of Allâh. Similarly I have dedicated my life to the Path

of Allâh and have always obeyed your summons and given you my allegiance. I have never swayed. If you should now make me commander of the Reconnaissance, I have hope that Allâh will not make me helpless."

Because he was more experienced than his father and an able horseman, Abû Bakr appointed him as the commander of Reconnaissance Forces. He gave him a flag and command over 2,000 cavalry. When 'Umar ﷺ heard of Sa'îd's ﷺ request and acceptance thereof, he became angry. He went to Abû Bâkr ﷺ and said, "O Khalifâh of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, you are giving the flag to Sa'îd whereas others are better suited than him. By Allâh! I know that whatever he said against enemies was directed at none other than me. By Allâh! I have never said a word against his father nor committed any act of enmity against him."

This confused Abû Bâkr ﷺ since he felt bad about deposing Sa'îd ﷺ as well as opposing 'Umar ﷺ because firstly, 'Umar had firm faith in his heart; secondly, he always gave good advice; and thirdly, Rasûlullâh ﷺ held him in high esteem. Perplexed, he went to 'Aishah and told her the whole incident. She advised, "My father, you know that 'Umar always keeps the welfare of the Dîn at heart. His words are always well-intended and he bears no ill-will against any Muslim."

Abû Bâkr ﷺ called Abû Arwâ ad-Dâwsi and ordered him, "Go to Sa'îd bin Khâlid and tell him to return the flag to me."

'Abdullâh bin 'Umar ﷺ narrates:

I was also part of that army when Abû Arwâ ad-Dâwsi conveyed Abû Bâkr's orders to Sa'îd bin Khâlid. At that time Sa'îd ﷺ was leading us in Salâh at al-Jurf. When he heard the order, he immediately returned the flag saying, "I have dedicated my life for the service of the Dîn and have placed myself firmly in the Path of Allâh. I will fight under the banner of Abû Bâkr with a clean heart in any place and under anyone's command."

6) Abû Bâkr ﷺ appoints 'Amr ﷺ as commander

While Abû Bâkr ﷺ was pondering over who should be appointed as commander of Abû 'Ubaydah's Reconnaissance, Suhayl bin 'Amr, 'Ikramah bin Abî Jahl and Harith bin Hisham ﷺ arrived. They were carrying their weapons and desired that they should be given command of the army. Abû Bâkr ﷺ perceived this and therefore consulted 'Umar ﷺ who replied, "I do not find this appropriate."

Hârith turned to him and said, "O Abû Hafs (i.e. Umar), you were a sword against us before we embraced Islâm. Now that Allâh has guided us, you still have no regard for our relationship whereas Allâh has commanded the fulfilling of relatives' rights."

'Umar : I consider those who are first in Islâm more appropriate.

Suhayl : If that is your criterion then we will not disobey you in any manner. However much time we spent in pre-Islâm fighting against Rasûlullâh , we will now spend twice that amount and whatever effort we made fighting him, we will now double our efforts against the enemies of Allâh.

'Ikramah : O people, I make you my witnesses before Allâh that I dedicate myself to the Path of Allâh and hand my life over to Him. Myself, my companions, my children and wealth are all for Allâh. We will never leave Jihâd.

Abû Bâkr : O Allâh, grant them greater than what they expect.

Thereafter, he handed the flag to 'Amr bin al-'As bin Wâil as-Sahmî and said, "I appoint you as commander of the army of the people of Makkah, Thaqîf, Tâif, Hawâzin, Banû Kilâb and Hadramawt. When you reach Palestine, write to Abû 'Ubaydah, 'If you require any assistance then I am here.' Do not do anything without his consultation. If you separate then may Allâh bless whatever the two of you intend."

'Amr went to 'Umar and said, "You know my harshness against the enemy and my patience in Jihâd. It would be well if you ask the Khalifâh to make me commander over Abû 'Ubaydah. You know my rank with Rasûlullâh and I hope that Allâh will grant victory through me and destroy the enemy."

'Umar : What you say is correct and I do believe you but I cannot assent to you commanding Abû 'Ubaydah. I consider him higher ranking than you. He preceded you in Islâm and Rasûlullâh said, "Abû 'Ubaydah is the trustworthy one of this Ummah."

'Amr : If I command him then he will not be humiliated nor will there be any decrease in his status.

'Umar : How sad, O 'Amr, that you desire worldly honour and prestige. Fear Allâh. Choose the honour of the world to come.

'Amr : The matter is as you have stated it.

'Amr ﷺ ordered the army to march and so they left under his command in this order: Makkah, Banû Kilâb, A<u>s</u>nâ<u>h</u>î, Hawâzîn and Thaqîf. The Muhâjirîn and An<u>s</u>âr stayed to join Abû 'Ubaydah. 'Amr ﷺ made Saîd bin Khâlid ﷺ head of his Advance Reconnaissance.

Abû Dardâ ﷺ narrates that he was part of 'Amr's ﷺ army when it departed and heard Abû Bâkr's ﷺ departing advice:

> *Fear Allâh in secret and open. Maintain your modesty towards Him in private because He always watches you. You know very well that I have appointed you over such people who are more honourable and pious than you. Perform all acts to earn the Hereafter and to please Allâh. Be like an affectionate father towards your men.*
>
> *Do not race in your march. Enquire as to their welfare. Amongst them are different kinds of people including frail and weak ones, and you have a long journey ahead of you. Allâh is the Helper of His Dîn and will make it triumph over every other religion even if the Polytheists dislike it. Do not take your army on the route which Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân, Rabî'ah bin 'Âmir and Shura<u>h</u>bîl bin <u>H</u>asanah took. Instead, take the Aylah route and you will, if Allâh wills, reach Palestine. Upon reaching there, appoint spies and informants and keep intelligence about Abû 'Ubaydah's condition. If he is victorious then start campaigning in Palestine, otherwise if he needs assistance then send armies one after the other under Suhayl, 'Ikramah, <u>H</u>arith and Sa'îd bin Khâlid.*
>
> *Do not be lazy or negligent in the task to which you have been appointed. Avoid indolence as far as possible. When you see the greater enemy number do not say, "What trouble has Abû Bâkr bin Abî Qu<u>h</u>âfah trapped us in. He has sent us against an enemy it is impossible to fight against," because, O 'Amr, you have*

seen many times how small numbers have taken on greater numbers of polytheists. Remember the Battle of Khaybar and you will recall how the Muslims gained victory before your very eyes.

O 'Amr, there are with you such Muhâjirîn and Ansâr who fought at Badr. Respect and honour them. Fulfil their rights and do not be arrogant in your leadership towards them thinking, "Because Abû Bâkr appointed me over them I must be better than them." Beware the deception of the ego. Consider yourself but a fellow soldier with them. Consult them in whatever task presents itself. Salâh is the greatest thing. Call the athân as soon as the time of Salâh sets in.

Never pray any Salâh without athân. Pray when the whole army has heard it. Those who pray with you in congregation will have attained a great virtue while those who pray in their tents will receive their full reward. Listen attentively to ambassadors and do not put them off for the sake of others. Always remain on your guard against the enemy. Emphasise the importance of reading the Qurân to your companions. Appoint watchmen and security and oversee them.

Spend time with your companions at night. Neither punish too harshly nor give so much leeway which will embolden them against you. As far as possible avoid whipping anyone – lest he should join the enemy and help them against you. Do not investigate anyone too deeply, but accept him at face value. Make effort in your work. Have faith in Allâh when facing the enemy and keep this advice in mind. Emphasise to your companions that they should not fall to extremes and if they do they should be punished. When advising them be brief.

Rectify yourself so that our subjects may be rectified, for a pious ruler is closer to Allâh than an ordinary person. I have appointed you as commander over the 'Arabs, so recognise the worth of each tribe and clan. Treat them as an affectionate father would. Investigate the condition of the whole army at the time of marching. Send scouts ahead and keep those whom you can rely upon at the back for security. Be patient when you meet the enemy and be firm.

Do not turn back and expose yourself as cowardly, weak and helpless. Qurân readers should be particular in reciting the Qurân. The men should be prevented from discussing the Pre-Islâmic period since this will lead to enmity. Turn away from worldly beauty and adornment until you meet those who have gone before you, who died hungry. Join these people whom Allâh has praised in the Qurân:

وَجَعَلْنَٰهُمْ أَيِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ ٱلْخَيْرَٰتِ
وَإِقَامَ ٱلصَّلَوٰةِ وَإِيتَآءَ ٱلزَّكَوٰةِ ۖ وَكَانُوا۟ لَنَا عَٰبِدِينَ

And we made them leaders guiding (mankind) by Our command, and revealed to them the doing of good deeds, performing salâh and paying zakâh and they were Our worshippers. [21:73]

Abû ad-Dardâ ﷺ narrates:

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was also present when Abû Bâkr ﷺ was advising 'Amr bin al-'As ﷺ. Thereafter he said, "Now leave with Allâh's blessing and help. I advise you to fear Him, wage Jihâd in His Path and fight the Disbelievers. Allâh will certainly help the person who seeks His help."

Al-Wâqidî narrates:

9,000 men under 'Amr ﷺ marched to Palestine. The previous day, the Khalifâh gave Abû 'Ubaydah Jarrâh ﷺ a flag and appointed him as Commander-in-Chief of all the Islâmic armies. He ordered him to advance towards al-Jâbiyah and said, "O Trustworthy one of this Ummah, you have heard my advice to 'Amr bin al-'As. I now bid you farewell."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ then departed while Abû Bâkr ﷺ returned and called Khâlid bin al-Walîd al-Makhzûmî ﷺ. He appointed him commander over Lakhm and Juthâm as well as a cavalry of 900 men and gave him the black banner of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. These 900 had demonstrated their daring and self-sacrifice in most battles they had fought with Rasûlullâh ﷺ. Abû Bâkr ﷺ then said to him, "O Abû Sulaymân (i.e. Khâlid), I have appointed you over this army which you must take to Aylah and Persia. I have hope in Allâh that he will conquer these lands through you. If He wills you shall be assisted."

Khâlid ﷺ then departed for 'Irâq.

Ruwaym bin 'Amir narrates from Wâqis bin Sayf ash-Shabkarî:

I was with the army which Abû Bâkr ﷺ sent to Aylah and Palestine under the leadership of 'Amr bin al-Âs ﷺ, with Sa'îd bin Khâlid bin Sa'îd ﷺ as flag bearer. I saw him waving the flag and reciting this poem:

We are marching with a small army from the best nation,
Against Disbelievers, Syria is our destination.
They worship the Cross an evil people are they,
I will cut them to the ground, with my sword I will slay.
I will pierce them thoroughly with my spear,
On the battle-field there is nothing I fear
In this war Paradise is my aspiration
And that with the pious be my resurrection.

Ruwaym bin 'Âmir says that he heard Mârik bin Jundub narrating from reliable reporters of the conquest of Syria, that Shurahbil bin Hasanah ﷺ was reciting the above poem the day Abû Bâkr ﷺ sent him after Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân and Rabi'ah bin 'Amir ﷺ.

Abû Bâkr ﷺ was making du'â for the victory of the armies he had sent to Irâq and Syria and was most anxious about them. 'Uthmân ﷺ perceived signs of this anxiety on his face and asked, "What troubles you?"

Abû Bâkr ﷺ : By Allâh! I know well that Rasûlullâh's ﷺ words are true. There can be no doubt whatsoever that we will conquer Rome and Persia but we do not know if that will be during this war or at some other opportunity, nor do we know which army will accomplish this.

'Uthmân ﷺ : That is true, but we should have hope in Allâh.

7) Heraclius sends 100,000 men against 'Amr ﷺ

That night Abû Bâkr ﷺ dreamt that 'Amr bin al-'Âs ﷺ and his men were passing through a dark, narrow mountain-pass and were greatly worried. They wanted to leave the pass. 'Amr ﷺ spurred his horse and the others followed him. Suddenly he found himself in a lush green, wide place. He encamped and found great comfort. This dream greatly pleased Abû Bâkr ﷺ. 'Uthmân ﷺ interpreted it as victory for 'Amr ﷺ and his army except it appeared that they would first have to undergo great difficulty.

In Pre-Islâmic times and then continuing in Islâm, traders would bring wheat, barley, olive-oil, raisins, apples and figs to sell in al-Madinâh. These traders were present when Abû Bâkr ﷺ was organising and despatching the army and thus heard the orders he gave to 'Amr bin al-'As ﷺ with regard to Aylah and Palestine. They went to inform Caesar Heraclius of this as well as of the defeat of the Romans at Tabûk. Heraclius assembled all his officials, war-experts and priests. He informed them of this saying, "O Romans, this is the matter of which I warned you some time ago. That Prophet's followers will soon seize my crown and throne and rule over this land. They cut to pieces your army at Tabûk. Muhammad's Khalîfah has despatched an army which will soon arrive. You should maintain your respect and fight heart and soul to defend your religion, family, dependants, lives and wealth. If you slacken now then the 'Arabs will capture your empire and wealth."

This news made them cry over their dead slain at Tabûk. Heraclius rebuked them, "You are men and you cry like this? Stop, for that is women's work. What you should now do is to gather your forces at Ajnâdayn." The Prime Minister said, "We request that those people who gave you this information be brought so that they may be questioned." Heraclius commanded this and so a soldier brought a Christian from the tribe of Lakhm.

Heraclius : How long is it since you left al-Madinâh?

Lakhmî : Twenty-five days.

Heraclius : Who is the leader of the Muslims?

Lakhmi : His name is Abû Bâkr. He has collected an army and has sent it against you. I have examined them properly – they are energetic, cunning, prepared and firm.

Heraclius : Have you seen this Abû Bâkr?

Lakhmî : Yes, in fact he purchased a shawl from me which he draped over his shoulders. He is an ordinary looking man with nothing to distinguish him. He roams the market wearing two cloths overseeing that the strong fulfil the rights of the weak. He treats weak and strong equally.

Heraclius : Describe his features.

Lakhmî : Tall, wheat-coloured, light-cheeked, thin. His finger-joints are wide and his teeth are beautiful.

Heraclius (smiling) : So that is Muhammad's Khalîfah about whom we read in the Scriptures. His successor will be black-eyed, tall, wheat-coloured like a lion. He shall conquer and expel his enemies from their lands.

Lakhmî : I have seen such a person in his company who never separates from him.

Heraclius : I am now fully convinced. Previously, I tried to make the Romans understand and invited them to salvation but none listened to me and they refused to obey. Now the Romans will be expelled very quickly from Syria.

Heraclius had a golden cross made and handed it over to Rubius, the commander of the army, saying, "I have appointed you as commander of all my forces. Hasten towards the Islâmic armies and prevent them from occupying Palestine because it is a beautiful, prosperous territory. In fact, our prestige and power rests on it." Rubius organised his troops and marched to Ajnâdayn that same day.

8) War in Palestine

'Amr's ﷺ animals were weak and thin when he reached Palestine via the Aylah route. He encamped at a very lush place letting the horses and camels graze and so they recovered. One day the Muhâjirîn and Ansar gathered to consult each other on the

battle when suddenly 'Âmir bin 'Âdî, a distinguished and pious Muslim, arrived. He knew Syria's cities and roads well because most of his family and friends stayed there and he would often visit them. He was returning from there when the Muslims saw him and took him to 'Amr ؓ. 'Amr ؓ noticed a change in his face and exclaimed. "O 'Âmir, what is the matter? Why are you so afraid?"

'Âmir : Behind me is a Roman army mounted on very fine horses smashing aside everything in their path.

'Amr ؓ : You have put the fear of the Disbelievers into the hearts of the Muslims. We seek Allâh's help against them. Tell me, how many do you estimate them at?

'Âmir : O commander, I climbed up a very high mountain in order to estimate their numbers. Wâdi al-Ahmar, a big valley in Palestine, was completely filled with their banners, spears and crosses. I think that they are no less than 100,000. That is all I could find out. I apologise for frightening the Muslims.

'Amr ؓ : We seek Allâh's help, for all power and might belong to Him alone. O people, you and I are equal in the matter of Jihâd. Seek help from Allâh against the enemy and fight whole-heartedly in defence of the Dîn. Whoever is killed from us is a martyr and whoever remains is fortunate. Now tell me your opinions.

Bedouins : O commander, take us to a jungle so that we can encamp in the centre. They will not have the audacity to attack us there and cannot leave their forts and towns. When they learn that we are encamped in the centre of the jungle, their unity will break and they will become negligent. We will then attack and if Allâh wills, we shall be successful.

Suhayl bin 'Amr ؓ : That is a cowardly opinion.

Muhâjirîn and Ansar ؓ : We fought with Rasûlullah ﷺ and with small numbers defeated great armies. Allâh has promised you victory and commanded you with patience. Only patient ones are promised goodness. The Qurân says:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ قَٰتِلُوا۟ ٱلَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُم مِّنَ ٱلْكُفَّارِ
وَلْيَجِدُوا۟ فِيكُمْ غِلْظَةً

Fight those disbelievers closest to you and let them find you fierce against them. [9:123]

And you know that we are already in enemy territory while they are thirsty for our blood.

'Abdullâh bin 'Umar ﷺ : By Allâh! I will not abandon fighting and killing the Disbelievers and will not sheath my sword. Whoever wishes to may return, but remember that whoever flees from this great task can never flee from Allâh.

'Amr ﷺ was pleased with what the Makkans and Ibn 'Umar ﷺ said and exclaimed, "O son of al-Fârûq (i.e. 'Umar al-Fârûq ﷺ), you have fulfilled my wishes and your tongue has expressed what is in my heart. I wish to send an advance-force of 1,000 youths under your command to ascertain the position and condition of their outlying forces and so that you can tell us how to fight the enemy."

Ibn 'Umar ﷺ : Do this. My life is not so precious to me that I refrain from spending it in Allâh's Path.

'Amr ﷺ had a flag made for him and sent him off with 1,000 horsemen from Banû Kilâb, Tâif and Thâfîq. Ibn 'Umar ﷺ travelled for the rest of the day and the whole night. In the morning, he saw dust rising in the distance. He said, "This dust foretells of an army. I think that this is the Roman Reconnaissance." He halted the army there. A group of bedouins said, "Permit us to go and investigate this dust-cloud."

Ibn 'Umar ﷺ replied, "I do not consider it appropriate to split up for as long as we are uncertain as to what this is."

The cloud approached and then dispersed to reveal the Roman Reconnaissance of 10,000 horsemen which Rubius had sent ahead to investigate the Muslims. Ibn 'Umar ﷺ said, "Give them no respite but attack them. After all, that is why you came here. Allâh will help you against them. Remember that Paradise lies beneath the shadow of swords."

The Muslims proclaimed, "Allâhu Akbar! Lâ ilâha illallâh Muhammadur Rasûlullâh!" The very trees, stones and beasts replied to their cry. They immediately launched an attack – the first being 'Ikrama then Suhayl, then Dahhak bin Sufyân ﷺ roaring his challenge.

The Muhâjirîn and Ansar ﷺ then attacked. The two armies clashed, sword and spear doing their work.

Ibn 'Umar ﷺ narrates:

During the battle, I saw a bulky Roman horseman riding at the right and left flanks. It appeared to me that he must be the commander, although signs of fright of battle and cowardice were plainly visible on his face. His fat bulk gave him the appearance of a drunk, angry camel. I thrust my spear forward causing his horse to move back. I then held my spear back which made him think that I was fleeing and encouraged him to attack me. I put aside my spear, and drawing my sword, hacked at his spear. The spear-point fell off leaving him with a bare stick and so I struck a second blow. By Allâh! I thought I had hit a rock and when a ringing sound reached my ears, I thought that my sword had broken. However, this was not so and it was as intact as before. The severity of the blow slaughtered the enemy of Allâh and I struck again at his shoulder-vein until he fell and I took off his armour. When the Disbelievers saw their leader fallen and slain, they became frightened and the Muslims began slaying them energetically. Congratulations to Dahhak bin Sufyân and Harith bin Hishâm ﷺ who fought solely for Allâh's pleasure. During the battle, I was entrapped in a difficult situation, but Allâh soon granted the Muslims victory. Many Disbelievers were killed or captured.

The Muslims gathered all the booty together and then said to each other, "We do not know how Allâh has dealt with Abdullâh bin 'Umar." Some said, "He has been killed." Someone said, "No, he has been captured." Some said, "Whatever Allâh has decreed for him will be good due to his ascetism and worship." Someone said, "If Ibn 'Umar has been lost then this victory is not worth a strand of hair."

I was standing behind a hillock hearing all this and then shouted, "Lâ ilâha illallâh Muhammadur Rasûlullâh," and emerged wearing my flag. They turned to me and asked, "O commander, where were you?"

I replied, "I was fighting the enemy commander." Everyone made du'â for me and said, "Allâh granted this victory through your blessing."

I said, "No, it is your good fortune."

The Muslims gathered the booty which included horses, weapons and money and 600 captives. The following seven Muslims were martyred: (1) Surâqah bin 'Adî; (2) Nawfal bin 'Âmir; (3) Saîd bin Qays; (4) Sâlim, the freed slave of 'Âlim bin Badr al-Yambarlû'î; (5) Abdullâh bin Khuwaylid al-Mâzinî; (6) Jâbir bin Râshid al-Hadramî; (7) Aws bin Salamah al-Hawâzinî.

Ibn 'Umar ﷺ led the Salâtul Janâzah and they were buried.

The army cheerfully returned to 'Amr bin al-Âs ﷺ and reported to him. He was greatly pleased and thanked Allâh. Then he called the prisoners and said, "Who amongst you knows 'Arabic?"

Three Syrians admitted to knowing 'Arabic and so he asked them about their army and commander. They replied, "O 'Arabs, Heraclius has sent Rubius against you with an army of 100,000 men and has instructed him to prevent anyone from entering Aylah. Rubius's army is hastening, hoping to reach here by tonight. There is none in the Roman Empire equal to him in the art of warfare. He is most capable of taking you on and will destroy you all."

'Amr ﷺ : I hope that Allâh will slay him just as his companions have been slain.

He then presented them with Islâm but none accepted, so he turned to the Muslims and said, "The Roman army will soon be arriving in Syria to take revenge. If we release these captives, they will join the Roman army. Therefore, they will all be killed. Be prepared for it is most probable that the enemy is coming against us. If they confront us, then we will make life difficult for them. If they do not face us their power will decrease and if we advance against them then I have firm faith in Allâh that He will grant us a victory such as that which He just gave before. Faith should always be kept in Him."

Abû ad-Darda ﷺ narrates:

That night we encamped there and in the morning we marched but a short distance when we saw the enemy approaching carrying nine crosses with 10,000 horsemen under each cross. When the two armies neared each other, we saw Rubius, who looked like a stallion, organising his army. 'Amr ﷺ too was organising his army. He put the right-flank under Dahhak bin Sufyân ﷺ, the left-flank under Sa'îd bin Khâlîd ﷺ, the rear-guard under Abû ad-Dardâ ﷺ, while he himself stood with the Muhâjirîn and Ansar ﷺ at the centre. He ordered every Muslim to start reciting the Qurân and said, "Allâh is testing you in this virtuous deed so be patient in the face of difficulty and hope for reward and Paradise."

Then he lined the men in war-formation. From a distance Rubius was observing the Muslim army, seeing that their formation was such that rein was touching rein, stirrup touching stirrup as if they were a strong fortress, and every soldier was reciting the Qurân. Then he saw light shining on their horses' foreheads. This he took as an omen of his defeat and a Muslim victory and sensed terror in the heart of every

Roman at the Muslims. He awaited to see what the Muslims would do and his pride was shattered.

Abû ad-Dardâ ‎ narrates:

The first to go forward from the Muslims was Sa'îd bin Khâlîd bin Sa'îd ‎ who shared a common mother with 'Amr bin al-'Âs ‎. He shouted, "Is there any challenger?" and attacked them right and left. He slew many of them and overcame their champions. Then he attacked a second time, penetrating their ranks and wreaking havoc. Eventually they gathered to attack him and martyred him. The Muslims, especially 'Amr ‎, were grief-stricken. He said, "O no! O no! By Allâh! O Sa'îd, you have shown how to sacrifice life in the Path of Allâh. O brave Muslims, who amongst you are brave enough to join me in an attack so that I can taste my fate and meet Sa'îd?" Dahhak bin Sufyân, Thul Kalâ al-Himyarî, 'Ikramah bin Abî Jahl, Hârith bin Hishâm, Mu'âth bin Jabal, Abû ad Dardâ, 'Abdullâh bin 'Umar, Wâsid bin Warîm, Nawfal, Sayf bin 'Abbâd al-Hadramî, Sâlim bin 'Ubayd, the Muhâjirîn, the veterans of Badr etc. immediately replied, "We are present."

Ibn 'Umar ‎ narrates:

We were seventy youths who charged so vigorously that we soon neared the enemy. However, they were like a mountain of iron and did not concern themselves about us. When we saw their firmness, we shouted at each other, "Cut down their mounts, for besides this we see no other way to destroy them." So we speared the bellies of the horses which then fell and so they attacked us. We, in fact the whole Islâmic army, responded to their attack. Our force compared to theirs was like a white mark on a black camel. Our slogan was, "There is no deity but Allâh. O Rabb, help the Ummah of Muhammad, salutations and peace be upon him."

Abû ad-Dardâ ‎ narrates:

We were so busy fighting that we did not even recite war-poems. So tumultuous was the battle that striking a blow, we could not be sure if a Muslim or a Disbeliever was struck. Although few in number, we remained firm-footed, placing our trust in Allâh. Every Muslim struck with his sword, saying firmly from his heart, "O Allâh, help the Ummah of Muhammad, peace and salutation upon him and his family, against those who have taken a partner with you."

Ibn 'Umar ﷺ narrates:

The battle continued until noon. I was reciting the du'a which Rasûlullâh ﷺ had taught and when I looked towards the sky, I saw gates. From the gates there emerged horsemen dressed in white carrying green banners with shiny points. A proclaimer announced, "O Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ, Allâh has sent help to you."

I said that this victory was due to the blessing of the du'â of Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

By the Ka'bah's Rabb! In a short while I saw the Romans fleeing in confusion and the Muslims pursued them. An announcer proclaimed victory. Because our horses were faster, we managed to kill over 10,000 men. We pursued them until nightfall. 'Amr ﷺ was overjoyed with this victory and his heart remained with us during the pursuit in Palestine.

'Âmr bin 'Itâb narrates:

At that moment, I saw 'Âmr bin al-'Âs ﷺ carrying the flag in his hand and his spear was hanging from his shoulder. He was clasping his hands saying, "May Allâh return what has been lost to that person who returns my people to me." When the 'Arabs returned he said, "Whoever made effort and underwent difficulty for Allâh's pleasure has pleased Allâh. Was this victory which Allâh granted you not enough that you had to go and chase them?" The Muslims replied, "We did not chase them for booty, but for Jihâd."

When they returned they were without worry, but when they started looking at each other they discovered 130 missing, including Sayf bin 'Abbâd al-Hadrami, Nawfal bin Dârim, Sâlim bin Ruwaym, Ashab bin Shaddâd, some Yamanîs and bedouins of Madînah. This saddened 'Amr ﷺ but after thinking, he said to himself, "O 'Amr, Allâh intends some good for them but you reject this."

Then after the athân and iqâmah, all those Salâh which were missed due to the battle were performed.

Ibn 'Umar ﷺ narrates:

By Allâh! Due to fatigue, very few performed Salâh behind 'Amr ﷺ, most prayed at their own places. Booty was also little. We then slept in our tents. In the morning, 'Amr bin al-'Âs called out the athân and, after the Salâh, ordered the booty and bodies of the martyrs to be gathered. So the people started searching and gathered 130 martyrs, but could not find the body of Sa'îd bin Khâlid. 'Amr started searching

himself and then found him in a place where horses had continuously trampled the corpse, shattering the bones into small pieces. Seeing this, he began to weep profusely and said, "O Sa'îd, may Allâh, the Most Merciful of those who show mercy, have mercy upon you. I made a promise to Him but you fulfilled it." He put him with the other martyrs and ordered them to be buried, and then all the Muslims performed Salâtul Janâzah. *(Sa'îd ﷺ was 16 – 18 years old - translator's note).* 'Amr ﷺ then ordered the booty to be brought to him and wrote to Abû 'Ubaydah bin Jarrah...

9) 'Amr's ﷺ letter to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ

In the name of Allâh, The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

From : 'Amr bin al-Âs

To : The Trustworthy One of the Ummah, Abû 'Ubaydah

I praise Allâh besides whom there is no other deity and send salutations on His Prophet. I had arrived in Palestine and fought against a Roman army of 100,000 men under the command of Rubius. Allâh granted us such a victory that 11,000 Romans were slain. 130 Muslims were granted martyrdom and have been buried in that part of Palestine conquered at my hands. If needed I can join you. Convey my salâm to all Muslims. Was-salâm 'Alaykum wa rahmatullâhi wa barakâtuhu.

'Amr ﷺ sent this letter with Abû 'Amir ad-Dawsi. At that time, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was at the border and had not yet entered Syria but had divided the army as per Abû Bakr's ﷺ instructions. When Abû 'Amir came, he thought that he was Abû Bakr's ﷺ messenger and so he asked him, "Abû 'Âmir, in what state have you left the land?"

Abû 'Âmir : All is well and there is additional good news – this letter is from 'Amr bin al-'Âs describing the victory Allâh granted at his hands.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ read the letter and immediately fell down in prostration out of thanks.

Abû 'Âmir : By Allâh! Good, pious people have been martyred. Amongst them is Sa'îd bin Khâlid bin Sa'îd.

Sa'îd's ﷺ father, Khâlid ﷺ, was also present. He became bewildered and shrieked. He was so grieved that all the Muslims too began crying. Khâlid ﷺ then prepared his horse and mounted it intending to visit his son's grave in Palestine. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ asked, "Where are you going, Khâlid? You are one of the pillars of the Muslims."

Khâlid ﷺ replied, "I intend visiting Sa'îd's grave and hope to join him too."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ remained silent and then wrote the following letter to 'Amr:

> *In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*
>
> *Abû Bakr ﷺ has given you orders. If he has ordered you to join me, then come. If he has ordered you to remain where you are then stay there. Convey my salâm to all the Muslims.*
>
> *Was-salâmu 'alayka wa rahmatullâhi wa barakâtuhu.*

He then gave the letter to Khâlid bin Sa'îd ﷺ who went with Abû 'Âmr ad-Dawsî to 'Amr's ﷺ army.

10) Battle of Banû Salîf Hillock

Khâlid ﷺ made salâm to 'Amr ﷺ and weeping, gave him the letter. 'Amr ﷺ went forward, shook his hands and seated him with honour. Thereafter, he consoled him with regard to his son and advised him to have patience.

Khâlid ﷺ : Did you people see that Sa'îd reddened his spear and sword with the blood of Disbelievers?

Muslims : Yes, he fought bravely and really made Jihâd. He was not deficient in any way.

He then asked about the location of his grave, to which he went. He stood at its side and said, "O my son, may Allâh grant me patience with regard to you. Surely we belong to Allâh and to Him we return. By Allâh! If he grants me the necessary strength and courage, I will definitely avenge you. I trust in Allâh that He will reward you well."

Then he said to 'Amr, "I wish to go searching the Disbelievers in a night-raid. Perhaps booty will be gained or enemy soldiers met who can be killed in revenge."

'Amr said, "May my mother be sacrificed for you, my brother. Fighting will begin very soon. When it breaks out, you can fight whole-heartedly and not spare a single enemy."

Khâlid : I take an oath that whether anyone joins me or not, I will certainly go.

He then prepared his battle-gear intending to go alone but 300 young horsemen from the Himyar tribe went to 'Amr and said, "Permit us to go with Khâlid." He gave permission, so they left that very day. When they arrived at a meadow, they decided to encamp there so that the horses could graze and then they would travel at night. Suddenly Khâlid saw some old men in the fissure of a high mountain and said to his men, "I suspect that they are enemy spies. It should not be that the enemy descends upon us."

They replied, "They are on top of the mountain while we are here in an open field. How do we reach them?"

Khâlid said, "Alright, you stay here until I return."

He then dismounted, tied his turban, strapped his sword to his shoulder and said, "We can assume that they have not yet seen us, because if they had seen us, they would not have stayed. Whoever wishes to sacrifice his life in the Path of Allâh should do as I do." Ten men got ready and went with him to the mountain. When they reached the Disbelievers they were still in their place. Khâlid exclaimed in a loud voice, "Catch them! May Allâh bless your courage." The Muslims pounced upon them, killing two and capturing four. Khâlid questioned them and they replied, "We are inhabitants of Dayrul Faqî', Jâmi'ah and Kafr al-'Azîzah. Since the 'Arabs invaded our land, we have experienced great hardship and so most people have fled and taken refuge in forts. We came to take refuge here considering this mountain safe. We climbed to the top to ascertain conditions when you came and caught us."

Khâlid : Where is the Roman army?

Christians : They have reached Ajnâdayn and have been placed under the governor of Palestine in order to protect Jerusalem. The army as well as refugees have gathered at Ajnâdayn and some soldiers have come to us to gather army supplies. They have taken cattle and mules as beasts of burden but fear that the 'Arabs will attack. Besides this, we know nothing except that there is no doubt that they have gone out today to gather supplies.

Khâlid ﷺ : By the Rabb of the Ka'bah! That is booty. O Lord of all the worlds, help us against those people. What road are they taking?

Christians : This very road which you are on because this is the wide road and they have gathered the supplies at a sand-hill called Tall Banî Salîf (Banû Salîf's Hillock).

Khâlid ﷺ : What do you say about Islâm and what are your beliefs?

Christians : We only know about Christianity. We are mere farmers. Killing us will not benefit you in any way.

Khâlid ﷺ : They should be released.

Muslims : They should be released on condition that they take us to the supplies.

They agreed to this and walked ahead. When they reached the road, Khâlid ﷺ sent someone to fetch all the men who were left behind in the field. When all had gathered, they moved quickly with the four Christians guiding them. When they approached the hillock, they saw the Romans loading the supplies on beasts while 600 horsemen were stationed around the hillock. Khâlid ﷺ called out to the Muslims, "Remember that Allâh has promised you help against the enemy, and remember that Jihâd has been made compulsory upon you. The enemy is in front of you. Hope for reward and make full effort. Listen carefully to what Allâh says:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلَّذِينَ يُقَٰتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِۦ صَفًّا كَأَنَّهُم بُنۡيَٰنٌ مَّرۡصُوصٌ

Verily Allâh loves those who fight in His Path in rows as if they are a single solid structure. [61:4]

I am now going to attack them. You also attack, but none should overtake his companion."

Huthâfah bin Sa'îd narrates:

When the Romans faced us for combat, the farmers and slaves who were with the cattle, fled. The battle ensued for some time. Thul Kalâ' al-Himyarî ﷺ addressed his

tribe, "O people of H̲imyar, the gates of Heaven are open. Paradise is adorned for you. The virgin damsels of Paradise await you."

A Roman was encouraging his troops. Khâlid ﷺ recognised him to be the commander because of his splendid armour and mount. He went towards him and shouted threats so loudly that the enemy became frightened. Khâlid ﷺ said, "I am avenging Sa'îd" and thrust his spear so hard that the Roman collapsed like an iron wall. There was no soldier of Khâlid ﷺ who did not kill a Roman horseman.

We killed 320 horsemen while the rest fled in defeat, leaving behind money, equipment, mules, Turkish horses and supplies, which we seized in accordance with Allâh's command. Khâlid ﷺ fulfilled his promise and released the farmers. Taking the booty, he returned to 'Amr bin al-'Âs̲ ﷺ who rejoiced at Khâlid ﷺ and the Muslim's safe return with booty. He wrote a report on the battle to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and wrote also to Abû Bakr ﷺ about the victories and all the intelligence gathered on the Romans and sent it with Abû 'Âmir ad-Dawsî.

When Abû 'Âmir gave Abû Bakr ﷺ the letter, he read it out loud. The Muslims were overjoyed and shouted, "There is no deity but Allâh! Allâh is the greatest!"

Abû Bakr ﷺ then asked about Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. Abû 'Âmir replied, "He is still encamped at the border and has not entered Syria. He heard that Caesar Heraclius has gathered a vast army at Ajnâdayn and the Muslims fear defeat." From this Abû Bakr ﷺ understood that Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was too soft to fight the Romans so he consulted the Muslims about replacing him with Khâlid bin al-Walîd ﷺ. When they replied, "This is indeed more appropriate," he wrote the following letter of appointment to Khâlid ﷺ:

> *In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*
>
> *From : 'Abdullâh al-'Atîq bin Abî Quh̲âfah*
>
> *To : Khâlid bin al-Walîd*
>
> *As-Salâmu 'Alaykum*
>
> *I praise Allâh besides whom there is no other deity and send salutations upon His Prophet. I appoint you as commander of the Muslim armies and command you to fight the Romans.*

Hasten to search for Allâh's pleasure, slay the enemies and include yourself amongst those who fought in the Path of Allâh.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَٰرَةٍ تُنجِيكُم مِّنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

O you who believe! Shall I show you such a trade which will save you from a painful punishment? [61:10]

You are in command of Abû 'Ubaydah and his army.

Was-salâmu 'Alayka

11) Khâlid رضي الله عنه crosses the desert

Abû Bakr رضي الله عنه gave the letter to Najm bin Mafrah al-Kinânî who mounted his camel and made for 'Irâq. Khâlid bin al-Walîd رضي الله عنه was close to conquering Qâdisîyah when he received the letter. Upon reading it he said, "To obey Allâh and the Khâlifah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ is necessary." He left that very night taking the 'Ayn at-Tamr road and wrote to Abû 'Ubaydah رضي الله عنه to dismiss him and inform him of his coming to Syria,

"Abû Bakr has put me in charge of the armies of Islam. Do not move from your place until I arrive. Was-salâmu 'Alayka."

'Âmir bin Tufayl ad-Dawsî, a brave Muslim soldier, was sent with this letter to Syria.

When Khâlid رضي الله عنه reached as-Samâwah he said, "O people, water is scarce in this desert and should not be drunk too much. What is your advice?"

Râfi' bin 'Umayrah at-Tâî : O commander, it would be well if you act upon my opinion.

Khâlid رضي الله عنه : May Allâh guide you – implement whatever it is.

So he kept thirty camels thirsty for seven days and then gave them water, tied their mouths and mounted the camels and took the horses unladen. When they encamped, ten camels were slaughtered and the water that emerged from their slit bellies was filled in leather bags. When the water cooled down, it was given to the horses while the humans ate the meat. This was done at each encampment until the last camel (of

the thirty) was finished and two stages of the journey were traversed without water. The lack of water made Khâlid ﷺ very restless and fearing their destruction, he said, "O Râfi', the army is on the verge of death. Do you know where water can be obtained?" Râfi' was looking around and said, "O commander, tell me when we reach Qarâqir and Sawâ."

They hastened until most reached Qarâqir and Sawâ and some were left behind. When Râfi' was told, he became very happy. He removed the edge of his turban from above his eyes, took his mount and roamed right and left. Everyone encircled him and went with him until he reached an Arâk tree and shouted, "Allâhu Akbar!" so the Muslims too started shouting, "Allâhu Akbar!" He said, "Dig here." They started digging when all at once a spring gushed forth. The army encamped there and thanked Allâh. They drank and gave the camels to drink. Then they sent water-filled leather bags by camel to those who were left behind. This restored their energy and so they were able to join the others.

They rested there for a while and then hurried on until, when one day's travel was left, they found at Arakah a way-station built on the road. There were sheep and camels there. The Muslims searched for the shepherd to question him. They found him drinking wine while a manacled 'Arab was sitting nearby, whom they realised to be 'Âmir bin Tufayl ﷺ. Khâlid ﷺ was quickly informed. He rushed there on horseback and smiled when he saw Ibn Tufayl. He said, "O Ibn Tufayl, how did you end up caught like this?" Ibn Tufayl ﷺ replied, "O commander, I came to this way-station because I was suffering from thirst and heat. I wanted milk from this man but saw him drinking wine. So I rebuked him, 'O enemy of Allâh, you drink wine when it is forbidden.' 'O commander,' he replied to me, 'This is water not wine. Come down to me and smell it so that you can be sure that it is not wine. If it is wine then you can punish me how you like.' I dismounted my she-camel to smell what it was when suddenly he pulled out a stick from under his armpit and hit me so hard that my skull cracked. When I turned, he pounced on me and, tying me with a rope, said, 'It appears that you are of the men of Muhammad bin 'Abdullâh. I am keeping you until you can be taken to my chief.' I said, 'Who can your chief from amongst the 'Arabs be?' He replied, 'Qadh bin Wâthilah.' Sir, I have been in this condition for three days now. Whenever he drank wine, he seated me in front of him and threw the dregs on top of me."

Khâlid ﷺ became so enraged that he pounded the man's head with his sword-hilt and killed him. The Muslims confiscated the sheep and camels, dug up the foundation of the way-station and freed Ibn Tufayl ﷺ. Khâlid ﷺ asked him, "Where is my letter?" He replied, "Tucked away in a fold of my turban. Nobody knew of it." Khâlid ﷺ said,

"Take it immediately to Abû 'Ubaydah and stay alert." So he mounted and went towards Syria. Khâlid ﷺ ordered the army to march on.

Arakah was a dangerous place for travellers from Irâq. There the Romans would collect taxes from murderous brigands and used to appoint a governor to reside there. When the Muslims arrived, Khâlid ﷺ ordered them to confiscate all wealth in the place and the outskirts, and this was done. The inhabitants took refuge in a fort where there lived a Roman sage. Amongst other sciences he had studied the prophecies of war. When he saw the Muslims he turned pale and said, "I take oath by your religion! The time has come." The people asked him, "What time?"

He replied, "These people have been mentioned in the prophecies. It is written that the first flag to come here from 'Irâq will be a victorious flag. The destruction of the Romans will be at hand. Examine them carefully – if their flag is black, the leader is broadly built, tall, fleshy, broad shouldered, strong in appearance, pox-marked in the face and wheat-coloured, then know that he will conquer Syria." They saw that that was his exact description so they went to the governor and said, "You know that the sage, Samuel, never utters a word without wisdom and we have seen with our very own eyes whatever he described to us. We feel that we should make peace with the 'Arabs in order to protect our wealth, children and households." He replied, "Let me think until morning comes."

So the governor went home passing the whole night pondering over the issue. He was a highly intelligent man and so examining all factors, said to himself, "If I oppose the citizens it is possible that they seize me and hand me over to the 'Arabs. I know with certainty that a small 'Arab force defeated Rubius in Palestine because terror of the 'Arabs is so embedded in the hearts of the Romans that it will never leave."

In the morning he summoned the citizenry and asked, "What do you intend?" They replied, "We wish to make peace with the 'Arabs and stay here in our city." He said, "I am but one of you and cannot oppose you." A widely travelled and experienced man was sent to Khâlid ﷺ to offer peace. He accepted and spoke to him gently and politely in the hope that when the people of Sakhnah, Hawran, Palmyra and al-Qaraytayn heard of the peace, they would also accept Islâmic rule. He said, "I am making peace on the conditions that I shall withdraw my army from here, that whoever wishes to join Islâm will be welcomed and whoever stays on his religion will have to pay Jizyah."

Khâlid ﷺ levied 2,000 dirhams and 1,000 dînârs on them and signed a treaty. Before he even left there, the people of Sakhnah came to make peace. When the people of Palmyra heard about this, their governor, Karkar, gathered them and said, "I have

been informed that the 'Arabs have peacefully taken over Arakah and Sakhnah. I have heard from my own men that the 'Arabs are peaceful, just and good natured men who deplore wickedness and corruption. Our fort is quite secure and none can penetrate it, but there is fear that our orchards and plantations will be ruined. I therefore suggest that we make peace with them. If our people are victorious then we will annul the treaty and if the 'Arabs are victorious we will be safe." This pleased the citizens and they prepared a feast.

Khâlid رضي الله عنه arrived and they stood to serve and welcome him. He thanked them and levied three Ûqiyah (367.4 g) of silver and gold and signed the peace treaty. After making peace with Sakhnah and Palmyra, Khâlid bought provisions and animal fodder and then advanced on Hâwran.

In the meantime, 'Amir bin Tufayl رضي الله عنه brought the letter to Abû 'Ubaydah رضي الله عنه. Upon reading it he smiled and said, "All praise belongs to Allâh alone. I gladly obey Allâh and the Khâlifah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. He then informed the Muslims of his dismissal and Khâlid's رضي الله عنه appointment.

Abû 'Ubaydah رضي الله عنه had sent Shurahbil bin Hasanah رضي الله عنه to Busrâ with 4,000 horsemen. Upon arriving there, they pitched their tents. Both the Emperor and ordinary Romans respected its governor, Romanus. He was a scholar of the previous religious books and was bulky in physique. The Romans would come from the far-off cities of Syria to see him and hear his advice and wisdom. At that time 12,000 men were stationed at Busrâ. 'Arabs from Yaman and Hijâz would come there to trade. At a special time of the year Romanus would sit in a chair placed for him so that the people could see him and benefit from his knowledge, and it was that time of the year when the Muslim army came. There were many people and upon the army's arrival, tumult erupted. Romanus quickly mounted his horse and called out to the people who shouted back. He said, "Be quiet. I am going to the Muslim army to find out what they want." He went and called out, "O Arabs, I am Romanus, the governor of Busrâ and I want to meet your leader." Shurahbîl رضي الله عنه then came.

Romanus : Who are your people?

Shurahbîl رضي الله عنه : We are the Sahâbah of Muhammad ﷺ, the Messenger of Allâh and the Unlettered Prophet who was prophesied in the Torah and Gospel.

Romanus : What has become of him?

Shurahbîl رضي الله عنه : Abû Bakr Abdullâh al-'Atîq bin Abî Quhâfah is his successor.

Romanus : I take oath by my religion that I know very well that you are on the Truth and that you will conquer 'Iraq and Syria. However, you are few while we are many. I will do this favour to you of making peace with you. You return to your land and we shall not interfere with you. O my 'Arab brother, Abû Bakr is my close friend. If he were present here, he would never fight against me.

Shurahbîl ؓ : In matters of religion he had no consideration for his own son and nephew until they embraced Islâm. He has no personal choice in that Allâh has ordered us to wage Jihâd. We will not leave until one of three outcomes has been decided upon. Firstly, you should embrace Islâm. Failing that, your second option is to pay Jizyah. If that is also not acceptable, then we will have to do battle.

Romanus : I take oath by my religion and faith that if the matter were in my hands, then I would never fight you because I know you to be upon the Truth. The Romans have gathered. Let me go to them and make them understand and see what they feel.

Shurahbîl ؓ : Very good, but hurry for what we have told you about Islâm, Jizyah or war still stands.

Romanus returned to his people and said, "O upholders of Christianity and sons of baptism water, the arrival of the 'Arabs heralds the loss of your wealth and the death of your leaders and champions. This has been foretold in your scriptures and it is imminent. You do not have Rubius's army nor his bravery. A handful of 'Arabs destroyed him in Palestine, massacred his champions and the rest fled in defeat. I have been informed that a man called Khâlid bin al-Walîd is invading from 'Irâq. He has conquered Arakah, Sakhnah, Palmyra and Hawrân and is swiftly heading here. I therefore suggest that we render Jizyah to the 'Arabs and place ourselves under their protection in order to avert this disaster."

The Romans were so infuriated at his words that they wanted to kill him, so he quickly said, "I was merely testing your loyalty to Christianity. I am with you and will go first to confront them."

The Romans prepared for battle and donned leather armour. Seeing this, Shurahbîl ؓ addressed his troops, "May Allâh have mercy on you. Rasûlullâh ﷺ has said that Paradise lies beneath the shadow of swords and that the most beloved drop unto Allâh is a drop of blood shed in Allâh's Path and a tear-drop shed out of fear of Allâh. Fight in all earnest and fire your arrows simultaneously so that they are not wasted."

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ ٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِۦ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ

O you who believe, fear Allâh as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims. [3:102]

Ruwaym al-'Absî narrates:

I was with Shurahbîl's ؓ army. 12,000 youths attacked us expecting victory. Compared to them, we were like a white mark on a black camel. We persevered like the man who knows he is about to die. The enemy were convinced of victory. I then saw Shurahbîl raising his hands to the sky making du'â, "O Ever-living! O Maintainer of all! O Creator of the Heavens and Earth! O Possessor of Majesty and Nobility! O Allâh, you have promised us the conquest of Syria and Persia through the tongue of your Prophet. O Allâh, help those who believe you to be One against those who deny You. O Allâh, help us against the Disbelievers."

By Allâh! He had hardly finished his du'â when Allâh helped us. The enemy had encircled us from all four sides and were expecting imminent victory when suddenly a dust-cloud arose from the direction of Hawrân. As it neared, horses could be distinguished and then a flag. We could see two horsemen, one of whom declared, "Shurahbîl, receive tidings of Allâh's Dîn being helped. I am the well-known horseman, Khâlid bin al-Walîd."

The other said, "I am 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr." Then the tribes of Lakhm and Juthâm arrived followed by the rest of the army. Râfi' bin 'Umayrah at-Tâî carried the flag, Ra-yatul 'Uqâb (Flag of the Eagle).

The Romans' spirit broke as soon as they heard Khâlid's ؓ call. The Muslims exchanged salâm. When Shurahbîl ؓ gave Khâlid ؓ salâm he said, "O Shurahbîl, did you not know that this is a special time when the people of Syria, Hijâz and 'Irâq gather here? Roman troops and leaders come here so I cannot understand how it is that you have entrapped yourself like this?"

Shurahbîl ؓ : I did what Abû 'Ubaydah ordered me to do.

Khâlid ؓ : He is a simple man who fears Allâh. In matters of war, strategy and sophistication he is inexperienced.

He then ordered them to rest and so they encamped and comforted each other.

The next day the Roman army again came. Khâlid ﷺ said to his men, "The people of Busrâ think, 'Their men and horses must be tired from the journey', and advance against us. You should place your trust in Allâh."

The Muslims armed themselves and mounted their horses. He then put Râfi' bin 'Umayrah at-Tâî in charge of the right wing, and Dirâr bin al-Azwar bin Târiq al-Kindî ﷺ over the left wing. Dirâr ﷺ was a brave young man whose intelligence and bravery was famous. The infantry was under 'Abdurahmân bin Humayd al-Lakhmî. Khâlid ﷺ split the advance-force under Musayyab bin 'Utbah and Math'ûr bin Ghânim and said, "When I give the order, jump immediately onto your horses and attack."

Khâlid and 'Abdurahmân ﷺ were advising the army and intended to attack when suddenly a strong massive horseman (Romanus), on whom gold, silver, silk and rubies glittered, emerged from the Roman ranks. He stopped in between the two armies and called out in 'Arabic in a bedouin accent.

Romanus : I am the governor of Busrâ. None but your leader should come to combat me.

Khâlid ﷺ came forward.

Romanus : Are you the leader?

Khâlid ﷺ : Yes, the Muslims will obey me for as long as I obey Allâh. If I should disobey Him, then my position is lost.

Romanus : I am of the Roman royal class and one of their sages. Truth can never be hidden from an intelligent man with foresight. I have read in the Scriptures and war prophecies that God will send a prophet from the Hâshim clan of the Quraysh tribe whose name will be Muhammad.

Khâlid ﷺ : He is our Prophet.

Romanus : Was any book revealed to him?

Khâlid ﷺ : Yes, the Qurân.

Romanus : Has alcohol been forbidden?

Khâlid ﷺ : We punish whoever drinks alcohol, lash a fornicator and stone an adulterer.

Romanus : Has Salâh been made compulsory upon you?

Khâlid ﷺ : Yes, five times a day

Romanus : Has Jihâd been made compulsory?

Khâlid ﷺ : If Jihâd was not made compulsory, then why else should we have come to fight you?

Romanus : I know that you people are on the Truth and I have great love for you. I have warned my people so that they can be safe, but they refuse to listen. I greatly fear for them.

Khâlid ﷺ : You should recite, "I testify that there is no deity besides Allâh alone. He has no partner. And I testify that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger." If you recite this then we and you share all benefits and loss.

Romanus : I will certainly become a Muslim but I fear that my people will kill me and enslave my women. However, I shall go to them and warn them. Perhaps Allâh will guide them.

Khâlid ﷺ : I fear that if you return without fighting me, they may harm you. Let us pretend to fight each other so that they do not accuse you and then you can return.

So they pretended to fight until Romanus said, "Attack forcefully so that I can flee the battlefield. Caesar has sent Darian to help and reinforce me. I fear that he will harm you."

Khâlid ﷺ : Allâh will help me against him.

He then violently attacked Romanus who fled to his people and Khâlid ﷺ did not chase him. The Romans questioned Romanus as to what had occured and so he said, "O People, the 'Arabs are energetic and clever. You cannot win against them. They will conquer Syria and the whole Roman Empire. Fear God and obey the 'Arabs. Enter into their protection just as Arakah, Palmyra and Hawrân have done. I only desire good for you."

They responded with threats and abuse and would have killed him had it not been for fear of Caesar's retaliation. They said, "Go home. We will deal with the 'Arabs."

Romanus was happy because this was what he wanted. He went home saying to himself, "Perhaps Allâh will grant Khâlid victory then I and my family can go with him."

The Romans then elected Darian and said to him, "When we have finished off the Muslims, we will take you to Heraclius to petition Romanus's dismissal and your appointment because you are more brave and intelligent than him." He said, "What do you wish from me?" They answered, "We want you to attack the Muslims and kill their leader. The rest of the army will then flee."

12) Busrâ conquered

Darian donned his armour and weapons and went to the battlefield challenging Khâlid ﷺ to fight him. 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr ﷺ said to Khâlid ﷺ, "You are the commander and the army remains for as long as the commander remains. I will therefore fight him." So the duel began with both armies watching. After a short while Darian realised that he could not win, so he fled and managed to escape to the Roman army because of his faster horse. When questioned, Darian said, "He attacked me most violently and I could not maintain my position. However, you should all now attack together." These words made them lose heart. Khâlid ﷺ immediately sensed this so he, 'Abdurahmân bin Abû Bakr, Dirâr bin al-Azwar, Qays bin Hubayrah, Shurahbîl bin Hasanah, Râfi' bin 'Umayrah, Musayyib bin Najîyah al-Fazârî, 'Abdurahmân bin Humayd al-Lakhmî, led the Muslims in an attack. The Romans now had no choice but to remain steadfast and so advanced against the Muslims, but Roman heads and blood soon littered the ground. At the city wall, conches were sounded. The Priests raised a tumult and, looking at the sky, began praying their prayers of disbelief.

Shurahbîl ﷺ responded with this du'â, "O Allâh, these impure people invoke Your curse with words of disbelief and call unto a deity besides You. There is no deity but You. We invoke Your curse with the words of 'There is no deity but You' and with the intercession of Muhammad - salutations and peace be upon him and his family - against Your Disbelieving enemies."

As he was reciting the du'â the Muslims were saying, "Âmîn, Âmîn" and then attacked all at once. The enemy, fearing the fall of the fort, fled covering the earth with their corpses. They were so confused that when they reached the city gates, they began killing each other in the ensuing mayhem. They entered the fort taking refuge behind its walls and towers. They raised flags and crosses and sent a message to Heraclius requesting him to send reinforcements.

'Abdullâh bin Râfi' narrates:

When they went behind the city walls, we stopped chasing them to assess the army's condition. Finding men to be missing, we found their bodies lying in the battlefield. 320 men, mostly from Bujaylah and Hamdân were martyred. Amongst the chiefs Badr bin Hamlah (ally of Thafîq), 'Âlî bin Rifâ'ah, Mâzin bin 'Awf, Sahl bin Nâshit, Jâbir bin Murârah, Rabî' bin Hâmid and 'Abbâd bin Bishr were martyred. Booty was gathered. Khâlid ﷺ led the Salâtul Janâzah and ordered the martyrs to be buried.

One night later 'Abdurahmân and Ma'mar bin Râshid and 100 youths were patrolling the camp when suddenly the horses raised their forelegs and neighed. The Muslims became alert and began investigating until they spotted a cloaked figure. When 'Abdurahmân ﷺ wanted to seize him, he shouted, "Wait! I am the governor of Busrâ. So he arrested him and took him to Khâlid ﷺ who recognised him and laughed.

Romanus : O Commander, my people have reviled me and ordered me to remain at home or else they will kill me. I stayed at home, but because my house is joined to the city wall, I managed to escape under cover of darkness and come to you. I wish that you send some youths with me to capture the city.

Khâlid ﷺ prostrated out of thanks and ordered 'Abdurahmân ﷺ to take 100 men and go with Romanus.

Dirâr bin al-Azwar ﷺ narrates:

I was amongst those who entered the city with Romanus. When we reached his house, he opened the storeroom, distributed weapons and said, "Wear Roman clothes." We dressed in Roman garb and split into four groups of twenty-five horsemen each in every direction of the city. 'Abdurahmân ﷺ said, "When you hear us saying, 'Allâhu Akbar' then you too call out 'Allâhu Akbar' immediately."

We arrived in our appointed place and awaited the attack.

Reliable narrators state that after 'Abdurahmân ﷺ appointed their places and he and Romanus donned their armour, Romanus offered him a sword which he accepted. Romanus then took him by the hand to the tower where Darian and his companions stayed. When they approached, the courtiers and guards bunched together. Darian asked, "Who are you people?"

Romanus : I am Lord Romanus.

Darian : Why have your unlucky feet come here and who is that person with you?

Romanus : This is my friend who wishes to meet you.

Darian : You wretch! Who is he?

Romanus : This is 'Abdurahmân, the son of the Khâlifah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, who has come to despatch your soul to the dungeons of Hell!

Darian wanted to attack but instantly lost heart so 'Abdurahmân ؓ unsheathed his sword and struck him violently on the shoulder so that he fell. He then led Romanus in proclaiming, "Allâhu Akbar! Allâhu Akbar!"

The Muslims heard the raised cries of "Allâhu Akbar!" in the four corners of Busrâ; the sound which the stones, mountains, trees, birds and Allâh-fearing people made into their melody. All pious people began expressing thanks.

When the Mujâhidîn started proclaiming, "Allâhu Akbar!" their swords began drinking Roman blood. Khâlid ؓ and his men responded by entering the city with shouts. When the Romans saw their city being invaded they shouted out sounds of grief. Women and children cried while youths shouted something in their language. Khâlid ؓ asked Romanus to translate. He said that they were begging for safety, so Khâlid ؓ ordered all swords to be immediately sheathed and they obeyed.

In the morning, the people all gathered around Khâlid ؓ and said, "If only we had made peace then this would not have befallen us."

Khâlid ؓ : Whatever the Eternal Distributor distributes must be received and what Fate is written must come to pass.

Romans : Who guided you in invading our city?

Khâlid ؓ felt embarrassed to mention Romanus, so Romanus himself got up and said, "O enemies of Allâh and His Messenger, I am the person who performed that deed for Allâh's pleasure as Jihâd in His Path."

Romans : Have you left our religion?

Romanus : By Allâh! I deny the Cross and those who worship it. Do not associate me with it. I am pleased to accept Allâh as my Rabb, Islâm as my Dîn, Muhammad ﷺ as Prophet and Messenger, the Ka'bah as my direction of prayer, the Qurân as Guide and the Muslims as brothers.

The Christians were furious and tried to discredit him. He sensed this and so said to Khâlid ؓ, "I do not intend staying here, but will go with you until Allâh grants you

the conquest of all Syria. Then I will return, for everyone is naturally inclined to his homeland."

Ma'mar bin Sâlim narrates from his grandfather, Lujayjah bin Mafrah:

Romanus was with us in every battle. He fought severely against our enemies and was earnest in the Path of Allâh until Allâh granted the conquest of all Syria. Then on Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ request, the Khâlifah 'Umar ﷺ appointed him as governor of Busrâ. He governed for a short while and then went to his Eternal Abode leaving behind a son who kept his memory fresh.

13) Story of Romanus's wife

After the conquest, Khâlid ﷺ appointed some men to help gather Romanus's belongings. Upon reaching his home, they found him arguing with his wife who was demanding a divorce. He said, "What do you want?" She replied, "The leader of your army will make the decision." So they took her to Khâlid ﷺ to whom she started complaining. A Roman who knew 'Arabic translated for them and said that she was laying a complaint against Romanus. When Khâlid ﷺ asked the cause, she replied, "I dreamt last night that an extremely handsome man whose face shone like the full moon came and said, 'The 'Arabs will conquer this and all of Syria and 'Iraq.' I said, 'Who are you?' He replied, 'Muhammad Rasûlullâh.' He then offered me Islâm which I accepted and then taught me two chapters of the Qurân."

Everyone was amazed and Khâlid ﷺ told the translator that she must recite those chapters. So she recited Surahs al-Fâtihah and al-Ikhlâs and renewed her declaration of Islâm to Khâlid ﷺ. She said to Romanus, "Become Muslim or divorce me."

Khâlid ﷺ laughed and said, "Pure is He Who guided her."

Then he said to the translator, "Tell her that her husband embraced Islâm before her."

This gladdened her.

Khâlid ﷺ then imposed an amount of tax on the people of Busrâ that was agreeable to them and after consulting them, appointed a governor of their choice to whom they could refer all their needs. He then wrote to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ to inform him of the victory and stated, "I am marching to Damascus. Meet me there."

He then wrote to Abû Bakr ﷺ:

As you commanded, I left for Syria where Allâh granted me victory over Palmyra, Arakah, Hawrân, Sakhnah and Busrâ. At the time of writing this report, I intend marching on Damascus, and hope for Allâh's assistance. Convey my salâm to all the Muslims. Was-salâmu 'alayka wa rahmatullâhi wa barakâtuhu.

14) Romans reinforce Damascus

Khâlid ﷺ sent the two letters and marched on Damascus. When a pass was reached, he encamped and unfurled the Flag of the Eagle and as a result it is now called Thanîyatul 'Uqâb (Pass of the Eagle). He then marched to Ghawtah where he encamped near a monastery and to this day that place is called Dayr Khâlid (Khâlid's Monastery). There he awaited Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. Damascus was filled with people from the surrounding area whose number could not be counted; 12,000 alone were mounted. The city walls were decorated with flags, crosses and spears.

When Heraclius received intelligence of Khâlid's ﷺ capture of Arakah, Palmyra, Hawrân, Sakhnah and Busrâ and his march on Damascus, he gathered his officials and said, "I warned you from the very beginning, none of you listened. The 'Arabs have captured Arakah, Palmyra, Hawrân, Sakhnah and Busrâ and are now heading towards Damascus. If it is lost, it will be an absolute disaster because it is the only city worthy of being called 'Paradise of Syria'. An army, double the size of the 'Arab army, will be sent to Damascus but I have to ask who amongst you will face them and defeat them? Whatever territory he liberates from 'Arab occupation will be under him and exempt from land-tax." Lord Calius, son of Hanah, a famous and brave champion from Syria who exhibited his bravery during the Persian invasion of Syria, said, "I am enough to take them on. I will defeat them and drive them out."

Heraclius gave him a golden cross saying, "Keep this in front of you to gain victory," and gave him 5,000 men.

Calius took the cross and departed the same day from Antioch. Upon reaching Hims, he found it to be filled with men and arms. The people came out to welcome him. The priests and monks were in front burning incense of ambergis and aloe wood. They carried Bibles on their chests and when they approached, the army recited 'Mass' on them, sprinkled holy water on the general and prayed for his success. They stayed there for a day and night and then advanced towards Jawsîyah whose inhabitants similarly came out to welcome them. Then they reached Ba'labakk. The women were striking their faces in mourning. Calius asked about the cause, to which

they replied, "The 'Arabs have conquered Arakah, Palmyra, Hawrân, and Busrâ and they are now heading for Damascus."

Calius replied, "I have received information that the 'Arabs are now at al-Jâbiyah. It amazes me how they have managed to conquer *these* cities and forts."

Ba'labakkîs : Yes, there is an 'Arab force stationed at al-Jâbiyah. However, these places were conquered by a different army coming from 'Irâq under a man called Khâlid bin al-Walîd.

Calius : How big is his army?

Ba'labakkîs : 1500 men.

Calius : I take oath by my religion that I will cut off his head and hang it on my spear.

He then left for Damascus.

The governor of Damascus, Uriel, was greatly revered by the Romans and had 3,000 cavalry and infantry under him. When Calius reached Damascus, the city elders came out to welcome him. He read out his letter of appointment to fight the Muslims and said, "I will fight with you against them and drive your enemies from your city on condition that Uriel is evicted from the city so that I remain in sole command." They replied, "Our Lord, how can we do that when the enemy is almost here? Instead of evicting a leader at such a crucial time, we would rather welcome ten leaders who could help us against them."

The governor said, "When the 'Arabs arrive, we can take turns of one day each to fight them. Whoever defeats them will administer the city."

The elders approved of this suggestion and so the decision was made. The two leaders then went to their separate quarters carrying hatred and enmity for each other in their hearts.

The Romans would leave daily from al-Jâbîyah Gate for a distance of one Farsakh (5.5km) in anticipation of Abû 'Ubaydah's ﵁ army. Instead, Khalid ﵁ was first encountered in the direction of the Thanîyah Gate.

Rifâ'ah bin Muslim narrates from his grandfather:

I was in the army of Khalid bin al-Walîd ﵁ encamped near the monastery when suddenly Romans were seen coming like a swarm of locusts. He donned

Musaylamah the Liar's armour, tied his turban around his waist while letting one side hang and called out, "O people, may Allâh have mercy on you for this is a day which will never be repeated. The enemy cavalry and infantry have arrived, do not spare a single one of them. Do Allâh's work and He will help you if you are patient. Include yourselves amongst those whose lives Allâh has bought. He says:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ ٱشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَٰلَهُم
بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ ٱلْجَنَّةَ ۚ يُقَـٰتِلُونَ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ

Allâh has bought the lives and property of the Believers in exchange for Paradise – they fight in the path of Allâh...
[9:111]

Remember that the army of your brother, Abu 'Ubaydah, is soon to join you."

The Muslims mounted their horses and so the Romans, who had intended to attack now hesitated. Khâlid ؓ organised the army as follows: Râfi' bin 'Umayrah over the right-wing; Musayyib bin Najîyah al-Fazâri over the left-wing; Shurahbîl over the front's right; 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr over the front's left; Sâlim bin Nawfal ؓ over the rear-guard while he took charge of the centre. After appointing the generals, he said to Dirâr bin al-Azwar ؓ, "Wage Jihâd in the manner of your father and tribe. Help Allâh's Dîn and He will help you. You will present yourself first for combat. Fight them with such bravery that their hearts become filled with terror and they flee."

Dirâr ؓ wore dirty clothes and an old turban and mounted on a thin fast filly. He attacked so furiously that the enemy ranks were thrown into tumult. He slew their four top horsemen and then, turning to the infantry, killed six. Had the Romans not showered him with arrows and stones, he would not have returned. Khalid ؓ and the Muslims thanked him.

'Abdurahmân ؓ then donned his armour and advanced for a test of strength. Khalid ؓ said, "O Ibn Abî Bakr, terrify the enemy with your attack. Stop only when you have torn their ranks apart. Allâh will bless your strength."

So he attacked in the manner of Dirâr ؓ and slew enemies before returning. Khâlid ؓ then attacked, displaying such exploits with his spear which utterly astonished the

Romans. Calius realised from his manner that he was the commander of the Islâmic army. He saw that Khâlid ﷺ had seen all his signs of leadership and the cross above his head and was therefore heading his way, so he backed away. Khâlid ﷺ attempted to reach him, but some Romans came to block him. They threatened him and fired arrows, but he was relentless in his advance. He rode his horse which was like lightning flashing in all directions. He continued like this until he killed ten Romans and then shouted, "Is there any challenger?" but none responded.

He shouted, "Then come in pairs against me!" but none came. He then challenged four and increased his challenge right up to ten, but none even answered him, so he said, "Be destroyed! I am but one man alone on a horse. Every soldier in my army is a warrior equal to me."

15) The Roman generals argue

Some people understood the challenge, while others did not. Uriel went to Calius and said, "Caesar has appointed you commander of the army to fight the 'Arabs. The protection of the citizens and the city is your responsibility."

Calius : Your responsibilty is more than mine because you were the governor before me. Do not delude yourself into thinking that I cannot withdraw without Caesar's order. Why do you not go and fight the 'Arabs?

Uriel : We have an agreement that one day you will fight and one day I will fight. Today you go.

Calius : I have already said that you came to this city before me so you go first. I will fight tomorrow.

The argument became personal and protracted so the people wished to draw lots to decide which of the two should go out to fight the 'Arabs, but then Calius said, "No, it is better that we make a united attack so that they stay in awe of us. We should not be divided." Uriel responded, "I do not care, do as you please." Calius then thought that if Heraclius found out about these things, he could be expelled from the court and even executed. So he changed his mind and insisted on a lottery. His name was drawn, so Uriel said, "Display such bravery on the battlefield which the 'Arab leaders displayed. When it is my turn, they will see which of us is braver."

Calius donned his armour, mounted his horse and said to his men, "Focus all your attention and strength on me. If I am overpowered then come immediately to my aid and save me."

They replied, "Cowardice drips from your words. Perhaps you will come back safely."

Calius : I am confronting a bedouin who speaks a different language. I wish to speak to him because precaution is a strong armour. Who amongst you can translate for me?

An intelligent Christian named Sergius, who was highly eloquent, volunteered and went with him.

16) Sergius's speech to Khâlid

Along the way Calius said, "The 'Arabs have a very bold leader. If I am overcome in battle you will have to help me. In exchange, I will make you my companion and minister, but do not reveal this secret – I shall delay the battle for so long that through some scheme I will return without fighting. Then when Uriel fights tomorrow he will be killed and then I will be relieved of him."

Sergius : I know nothing of warfare but can help you with my eloquence. I shall speak for as long as is possible and will not be deficient. Is that acceptable?

Calius : Alas, you wish me to fall into enemy hands!

Sergius : And you wish to sacrifice me to save yourself. Be fair, if I am killed then what use are your rewards, honours and gifts to me?

Calius kept quiet and went forward until he neared Khâlid ﷺ. Râfi' bin 'Umayrah wanted to attack him, but Khâlid ﷺ stopped him, saying, "Stay in your place. I, the servant of Islâm, am here."

Calius said to Sergius, "Ask who they are and what they want. Threaten them with our power and large army. Find out their intentions."

Sergius : O 'Arab, I wish to describe a parable to you. The comparison between you and us is like that of someone who owned a flock of sheep and appointed a cowardly, weak shepherd to watch over them. A lion broke into the pen, and because of the shepherd's cowardice, would come daily and take a sheep. When the sheep were almost finished and the lion had become accustomed to sheep's blood, the owner learnt about the shepherd's laziness and cowardice and so replaced him with a brave youth who would patrol the pen all night long. As per his habit, the lion returned but the shepherd, who was waiting in ambush, killed him with his spear. Thereafter, no beast dared attack the sheep. This is also your condition. We have been lax towards

you because you are an extremely weak, naked, hungry, labouring people. You have subsisted on stolen food, barley, olive-oil and by sucking dried date-pits. You have eaten our food since you entered our territory and have become that lion. You have come as far as you can and done whatever you could. Now Caesar has sent such a person against you who cannot be compared to any human and who is not concerned as to who crosses swords with him. He is none other than he who is with me. So beware lest you end up like the lion killed by the young shepherd. It is merely out of his compassion and pity for you that he has ordered me to speak to you. Therefore I am asking you what you want here. You are swimming in a sea whose waves will hit you until you drown and whose waters will choke you if you drink it. If you are in charge of this army then from your heart consider peace to be in your best interest before the lion comes charging from the jungle.

17) Khâlid ﷺ and Calius duel

Khâlid ﷺ replied, "O enemy of Allâh, you dare make an example of us? By Allâh! You should realise that we consider you just as a hunter considers sparrows trapped in a net, fluttering in all directions to escape. The hunter is neither scared of their numbers nor does he let any escape. What you said of our city and famine is true, but Allâh has now given us better. Instead of some grains, He has given us wheat, fruit, refined butter and honey. This land is ours. Our Rabb gave it to us and promised it to us through the tongue of His Messenger ﷺ. As to your question about what we want, it is one of three things – either accept Islâm, pay Jizyah, or fight until Allâh decides the outcome. You praise this wretched Calius but we take him as the lowest of the low. If he is a pillar of your empire then I am Khâlid bin al-Walîd, servant of Islâm and conquerer of Palmyra, Arakah, Hawrân, Sakhnah and Busrâ."

Sergius's face changed at hearing this eloquence and went back to Calius who said, "How sad that you attacked like a lion, then came back afraid."

Sergius replied, "I take oath by my religion that I mistook him for a vagabond but now find him to be a fighting ram, a killing horseman. This is the leader of a nation who has filled the Earth with evil, so advance and attack him." Calius had been quaking in his saddle like a leaf blowing in the wind since he heard Khâlid's ﷺ name. He said, "Tell him to postpone the battle until tomorrow."

Sergius replied, "I shall tell him, but I am not sure if he will accept," and turned to Khâlid ﷺ and said, "O commander of his people, my companion told me to tell you that you should return to your army and consult them."

Khâlid ﷺ : O fool, you tell me this when I am the very spirit of war. To escape me is very difficult.

Then he aimed his spear at Sergius who fled. So he shouted at Calius and attacked him, but Calius moved back until he neared his camp. Khâlid ﷺ caught up with him so he was forced to defend himself. The soldiers also began battling, their spears flashing brighter than flames. Calius again tried to flee during the heat of the battle, but realising his intentions, Khâlid ﷺ spurred his horse until they met bridle to bridle. He disabled his spear and then twirling a small spear smashed it above Calius's throat shouting, "There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except with Allâh's help the Most High, the Most Mighty!"

Then Khâlid ﷺ grabbed him and pulled him out of his saddle. The Muslims began shouting, "Allâhu Akbar! Allâhu Akbar!", while the hearts of the Christians quivered. The Muslims ran to Khâlid ﷺ, who handed his prisoner over to them saying, "Tie his hands behind his back."

Calius began raving, so they asked Romanus, "What is he wittering?"

Romanus : He says, "Why do you tie me up when I am prepared to accept what your commander has said. Do you not want Jizyah? I will fulfil all your wishes."

When Khâlid ﷺ was informed, he said, "Keep him firmly tied because he is their leader." Then he dismounted and mounted his horse, Shahrî, intending to attack the Romans. The governor of Palmyra had given Shahrî to him. Dirâr bin al-Awzar ﷺ protested, "You are tired from fighting the Roman general. Rest and permit me to go and fight."

Khâlid ﷺ replied, "Rest is in the Hereafter. One will be able to relax on the Day of Judgement according to the effort done today," and left for the battlefield.

Calius shouted, "I beg you in the name of your prophet to come here. I want to tell you something."

The Muslims shouted out, so Khâlid ﷺ returned and asked Romanus to question him. After speaking to him, he said, "He says, 'I am a courtier of Heraclius who sent me here with 5,000 cavalry. When I arrived here, Uriel, the governor of Damascus, argued with me. If he comes to you in battle, you should not let him live. If he does not come, challenge him to come and kill him, for he is the leader. If you kill him Damascus is yours. Will you do this?' "

Khâlid ﷺ : Romanus, tell him that I am killing whoever ascribes a partner unto Allâh and attributes a son unto Him.

Then he left for the battlefield reciting this war-poem:

لك الحمد مولانا على كل نعمة   وشكرًا لما أوليت من سابغ النعمِ
مننت علينا بعد كفر وظلمة   وأنقذتنا من حندس الظلم والظلم
وأكرمتنا بالهاشمي محمد   وكشفت عنا ما نلاقي من الغمم
فتمم إله العرش ما قد ترومه   وعجّل لأهل الشرك بالبؤس والنقم
والقهم ربي سريعًا ببغيهم   بحق نبيّ سيد العرب والعجم

O my Master! For every blessing I praise You,
O Bountiful One! For all you give I thank You.
After disbelief and darkness You have favoured us,
Taken us out of Doubts and Wrong's darkness.
Through Muhammad You saved us and removed what is blameable,
And made us assisted, guided and honourable.
You have named us the best of all nations,
So fulfil our intentions.
Let the Disbelievers taste
Their punishment with all haste!

When Sergius reached the Romans after fleeing from Khâlid ﷺ, he was quivering, so they asked him, "What is chasing you that has terrified you so much?

Sergius : Death! Such a death which cannot be overcome. A lion which cannot be fought - the Muslim leader who went into battle taking his Lord's name. Wherever we went, he was never lax in killing us. It was only with great effort that I managed to escape. It is better that we make peace before he comes with his whole army to attack.

Romans : O wretch! You come running away from your defeat and now want to terrify us.

They would have killed him but when they saw Calius arrested, they turned to Uriel and said, "Caesar's courtier is arrested through no fault of his own. You had an agreement amongst yourselves that he would fight one day and you the next, so now you will have to fight and kill that bedouin."

Uriel : Bear in mind that if he is killed another 'Arab will replace him, but if I am killed, you will be a flock of sheep without a shepherd. So it is better that we all go to attack.

Romans : We will never do that until the Day of Judgement, for thousands of lives would be sacrificed and thousands of women would become widows.

Friend of Calius : Your rank with Caesar is not equal to Calius's. The two of you had an agreement in which he fulfilled his side. Now that he is captured, you will have to go or else we will fight you.

Uriel : It is a pity that you think that I have not gone out of fright of a bedouin. I am going now and both armies will see who is the better warrior.

18) Khâlid ﷺ and Uriel duel

Uriel prepared his weapons, donned his armour, mounted a fast horse and set out to meet Khâlid ﷺ.

Uriel : O my 'Arab brother, come nearer so that I can tell you something.

Khâlid ﷺ (angry) : O enemy of Allâh, you come so that I can break your head.

Uriel : 'Arab brother, I am coming.

So he came closer to Khâlid ﷺ, who sensed his fear and did not attack him.

Uriel : You have a whole army, but still such a being like yourself comes for combat? If you are overcome, then they will be like sheep without a shepherd.

Khâlid ﷺ : O enemy of Allâh, did you not see how two of my soldiers attacked your army? Had I not prevented them, then with Allâh's help, they could have wiped your army off the face of the Earth. Every one of my soldiers considers death to be a blessing and life worthless... but who are you?

Uriel : What! You have never heard of me? I am the horseman of all horsemen, the defeater of the Turkish army and the Jurâmiqah.

Khâlid ﷺ : And your name is?

Uriel : The same as the angel of death, Uriel.

Khâlid ﷺ *(laughing)* : O enemy of Allâh, your namesake is in search of you to send you to Hell and is therefore remembering you!

Uriel : I ask you in the name of your religion, what did you do with Calius?

Khâlid ﷺ : He is sitting there with his hands tied behind his back.

Uriel : He brings nothing but disaster. What has stopped you from killing him?

Khâlid ﷺ : Because I want to kill you two together.

Uriel : Will you accept 1,000 Mithqâl (4.4 kg) gold, ten sets of silk clothing and five horses in exchange for giving me his head?

Khâlid ﷺ : That is the price of his blood. What is the price of your life?

Uriel (furious) : What will you take?

Khâlid ﷺ : Your disgraced head as Jizyah!

Uriel : 'Arab brother, the more we respect you, the more you disgrace us and increase in sarcasm. Prepare for attack.

Khâlid ﷺ blazed like a flame and attacked Uriel who fought back. The two engaged each other for a considerable time. Uriel was such a warrior that his exploits were recited by every Syrian child. He said, "I take oath by my religion! If I wish to, I can capture you, but out of mercy I will make peace with you and your army. It is better that you voluntarily hand yourself over to me so that everyone sees you captured."

Khâlid ﷺ : O enemy of Allâh, you entertain such hopes when this is the group which conquered Palmyra, Hawrân, Sakhnah and Busrâ, who sold their lives to Allâh in exchange for Paradise, who have chosen the Permanent Abode above the temporary abode and who have preferred the Hereafter over the world. Now you will find out which of the two of us will conquer his enemy and his enemy's territories and enforce his law therein.

He then increased the intensity of his combat and employed such tactics that confounded the enemy and, instead of speaking of capture, now began sweating and so said in a flattering tone, "'Arab brother, why do you joke like this?"

Khâlid ﷺ : My joke is the sword's strike, so that through it my Rabb becomes pleased with me. Be alert. I am attacking again.

He struck out, but not with a firm hand, so the enemy was saved. Yet the violence of the attack so frightened him that he fled, pursued by Khâlid ﷺ.

'Âmir narrates:

I was at the centre of the army watching the two adversaries when Uriel fled and could not be caught because of his faster horse. He turned around to see Khâlid ﷺ left behind and so (perhaps) thought, "The bedouin fears me. I will wait here to capture him. Jesus will help me," and so he paused there. When Khâlid ﷺ came close, his horse was perspiring profusely and was clearly tired.

Uriel : O 'Arab, do not think that I went away out of fear for you. Rather, I have taken you away from your men so as to catch you.

Khâlid ﷺ : Allâh, the Knower of the Unseen, knows best.

Uriel : 'Arab brother, it is still not too late for you to have mercy on yourself. Stop fighting and taking unnecessary risks. Surrender! However, if you really wish for death, then I am Uriel, snatcher of souls, angel of death.

Khâlid ﷺ : O enemy of Allâh, because of my slow horse you suddenly find courage? If my horse is tired, I will come on foot and kill you if you do not flee.

Then he jumped off his horse like a tiger, swinging his sword. Uriel became emboldened to see him on foot and circled him like a vulture intending to kill him. But Khâlid ﷺ hacked at a foreleg of the horse, bringing it down to the ground. Uriel ran to his camp with Khâlid ﷺ in pursuit shouting, "O enemy of Allâh, your namesake is becoming angry with you and wants to extract your soul. Be prepared."

He grabbed him with one hand but then the Romans launched an attack to free their governor. Suddenly, a Muslim army arrived on the scene under the leadership of Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. Khâlid ﷺ had earlier sent a messenger to him from Busrâ who had met him along the way and was still accompanying him when they came across Khâlid ﷺ apprehending the governor. When the people of Damascus saw the army, they became frightened and called off the assault, so Khâlid ﷺ arrested Uriel.

19) Battle of the Monastery

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ intended dismounting, but Khâlid ﷺ forbade him under oath because of the great love Rasûlullâh ﷺ bore for him. They met and exchanged salâm.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : My son, I was overjoyed to receive the Khalîfah's order concerning you. Not a shadow of a grudge passed my heart because I know what you have achieved in Persia and 'Arabia.

Khâlid ﷺ : I will do nothing without consulting you and will not blink an eyelid against you. By Allâh, were it not in obedience to the Khalîfah, I would never accept this post in consideration of your precedence in Islâm and your being a special Sahâbî of Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

The two shook hands and Khâlid's ﷺ horse was presented to him, which he mounted. As they were riding together to the camp at the monastery, he was telling Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ about the capture of the two generals and Allâh's help. When they arrived, the Muslims exchanged salâm.

The next day both camps prepared for battle, with the Romans coming out under the command of Heraclius's son-in-law, Thomas, a great general. Khâlid ﷺ said, "They truly fear the Muslims. Yesterday they were thoroughly humiliated and the capture of their two generals weakened them. So now we should mount a joint attack on them."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Very well, I am with you.

The Muslims altogether raised loudly the cry, "Allâhu Akbar! Allâhu Akbar! Allâhu Akbar!" until the cries reached the surrounds of Ghawtah. With this cry on their lips, the Sahabah ﷺ of Rasûlullâh ﷺ attacked, and the teeth of the Christians rattled. The Christians were humiliated while Allâh's friends, intoxicated with Jihâd considered their heads a small price to pay for their Friend's pleasure.

'Âmir bin at-Tufayl ﷺ narrates:

In that battle, each of us killed about ten Romans. The battle had hardly lasted an hour when they were dislodged. We chased them all the way from the Monastery to the Eastern Gate. When the Damascenes saw their cowardice, they shut the gates so as to prevent the cowards from entering.

Qays bin Hubayrah narrates:

When we reached the gate, we killed some and captured others and then returned. There Khâlid ﷺ said to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "I think that I should lay siege to the Eastern Gate and you lay siege to al-Jâbiyah Gate." He replied, "That is truly a good idea."

20) The siege of Damascus

The troops of al-Hijâz, Yaman, Hadramawt, Coastal 'Umân, at-Tâif and the surrounds of Makkah totalled 37,000 under Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. 'Amr bin al-'As commanded 9,000 cavalry in Palestine, while Khâlid ﷺ brought 1,500 youths from the 'Irâq front. So the total Muslim strength in Syria was, at that time, 47,500 excluding the number 'Umar ﷺ would later send during his rule and which will be mentioned later. Khâlid ﷺ took half the army and laid siege to the Eastern Gate while Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ took the other half to lay siege to the al-Jâbiyah Gate. This terrified the Damascenes greatly. Khâlid ﷺ summoned Calius and Uriel and offered them Islâm. Upon their refusal, he ordered Dirâr ﷺ to execute them which was done. Reliable narraters report that Dirâr bin al-Azwar ﷺ killed Uriel while Rafi' bin 'Umayrah dealt with Calius.

When the Damascenes found out, they wrote to Heraclius to inform him of the defeat and executions and added, "The 'Arabs are laying siege to the Eastern and al-Jabîyah Gates and have with them their women and children. Most of the prosperous territories have fallen into their hands. Rescue us or we will be forced to surrender to them."

At night a rope was tied from the city walls and a messenger lowered with the letter.

Heraclius was at Antioch when he received the letter. After reading it, he wept and flung it down. He called his officials and said, "O Romans, I warned you from the beginning about these brave 'Arabs. From the beginning, I told you that someday they would own my crown and throne, but alas, you took my words to be a meaningless joke and on the contrary you seek my death. Now these eaters of grain, barley and dried dates have left their dry, famine-stricken land and reached a land of fruit, vegetation, trees and lush greenery and they prefer the water and climate of our lands. Now nothing can evict them except firm resolution and fierce war. Were it not a disgrace, I would abandon Syria and go to Constantinople or else it seems as if I will have to personally fight them to defend my family."

They replied, "Their damage is not so great as to necessitate Your August Majesty's personal involvement in battle. Warden, the governor of Hims, our bravest warrior and ablest strategist, should be sent. You have seen his exploits against the Persians during their invasion."

When Heraclius summoned him to appoint him, he replied, "Were it not for fear of your displeasure, I would refuse this appointment because you overlooked me in favour of others and left me for last."

Heraclius : You were kept behind for a reason; because you are my sword and refuge. You will leave immediately with 12,000 men for Ba'labakk where the Ajnâdayn army is encamped. Send part to Balqâ and part to the Black Mountains with orders to prevent 'Amr bin al-Âs from joining Khâlid bin al-Walîd.

Warden : I accept wholeheartedly. I shall not show my face until I bring you the heads of Khâlid and his companions. Then I will invade al-Hijâz and level Makkah and al-Madînah to the ground.

Heraclius : I swear by the Gospel! If you fulfil your vow, I will grant you all the 'Arab-occupied territory and appoint you as my successor.

21) Heraclius sends an army to Damascus

Heraclius gave Warden a robe-of-honour, a scabbard and a gold cross which had expensive rubies encrusted on the four ends and said, "Keep this in front of you at the time of combat to assist you." Warden took the cross to a monastery where he sprinkled holy water on himself for blessing. The monks and priests prayed for his victory and burned incense. He then encamped outside the city at the Persian Gate and selected some people to accompany him. When all the preparations had been made, Heraclius accompanied him, with his officials, to the Iron Bridge from where he took the Ma'rât route and reached Hamâh. From there, he sent a message to the army at Ajnâdayn, "All roads and mountain-passes should be sealed off to prevent 'Amr bin al-'As from joining Khâlid bin al-Walîd."

He then gathered all his officers and said, "I wish to ambush the Arabs and catch them all. None will be able to escape."

All agreed, so they took the Salamîyah and Wâdî al-Hayyât route and marched at night.

Shaddâd bin Aws ❁ narrates:

After Khâlid ❁ had executed Calius and Uriel, he ordered us to attack Damascus. Some bedouins went ahead carrying leather shields. When the enemy saw this, they started flinging stones and arrows at us. The Yamanîs fired back with their arrows. The Romans began raising a cry – they were convinced that due to our impregnable siege, they would either be destroyed or made captive.

On the twentieth day of the siege, Nâdî bin Murrah came and informed us that the Romans had gathered a massive force at Ajnâdayn. Khâlid ❁ rode to Abû 'Ubaydah ❁ at al-Jâbiyah Gate to consult him and said, "O trustworthy one of the Ummah, I feel that we should invade Ajnâdayn and after winning, return here."

Abû 'Ubaydah ❁ : I cannot agree.

Khâlid ❁ : Why not?

Abû 'Ubaydah ❁ : Because we have tormented the Damascenes with a complete siege which has terrified them. If we leave now, they will have an opportunity to re-equip and renew their strength so that when we return it will be hard for us. Therefore, I do not feel it appropriate to move an inch from here."

Khâlid ❁ : I accept what you say.

He returned to the Eastern Gate and ordered all squadron officers to mount intense attacks on Damascus while he himself attacked the Eastern Gate. The people of Damascus underwent such difficulty on that day as they had never suffered before. Khâlid ❁ was encouraging the Muslims while reciting this war-poem:

Who will inform Abû Bakr that we
Are fighting the Roman army
Allâh has prohibited except that I break the Disbelievers
And relieve my spear's thirst with blood of Roman leaders.
Many victims will I fling to the ground
Many will weep at a friend no longer found.

The Muslims increased the intensity of attack, but the Romans protected by their fortress were still holding out on the twenty-first day. Their condition deteriorated with the lengthening siege and they lost all hope of receiving reinforcements from Caesar. They sent an envoy to offer peace in exchange for 1,000 Ûqiyah silver (122.5

kg), 500 Ûqiyah gold (61.2 kg) and 100 cloths of brocade and said, "Please come so that we can give you these things."

Khâlid ﷺ refused, saying, "We cannot compromise on this. Your choice remains one of these three – Islâm, Jîzyah or battle."

The envoy then returned to inform them.

'Urwah bin Shaddâd narrates:

The Damascenes were more inclined to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ than Khâlid ﷺ because the former was an old man who promised peace while the latter was a threatening warrior. Khâlid ﷺ gave the order for attack when suddenly the Damascenes were seen clapping their hands, dancing and shouting cries of victory, so he asked the soldiers who had reached the top of the fort walls what was happening. They gestured in the direction of the mountain and Bayt Luhyâ, where he saw such a massive dust-cloud rising that it blackened the heavens and earth. He understood that reinforcements were arriving so he alerted the Muslims and ordered them to prepare themselves. The Muslims mounted their horses with naked blades in their hands – each division under its own commander. Then scouts came to report that a massive army was present at the mountain, most probably a Roman army. Khâlid ﷺ exclaimed, "There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty."

22) Khâlid ﷺ consults Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ

Khâlid ﷺ spurred his horse and went to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ at al-Jâbiyah Gate and informed him of the latest developments.

Khâlid ﷺ : I intend taking all the Muslims to attack the enemy. What is your opinion?

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : No, because if the Damascenes see this territory unoccupied they will take it.

Khâlid ﷺ : Then what should we do?

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : A great brave warrior should be chosen to attack them. If he sees that his chances are good, he should proceed otherwise he should return.

Khâlid ﷺ : In our army there is one such person who does not fear death; an expert and brave warrior and whose father and father's brother were both martyred in Jihâd.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Who is it?

Khâlid ﷺ : Dirâr bin al-Azwar bin Sinân bin Târiq.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : By Allâh! You have chosen exactly the right man.

Khâlid ﷺ returned to the Eastern Gate and summoned Dirâr ﷺ.

Dirâr ﷺ : As-Salâmu 'Alayka.

Khâlid ﷺ : Ibn al-Azwar, I am sending you against the enemy with 500 horsemen who have sold their lives to Allâh in exchange for Paradise, who give preference to the Permanent Abode above the temporary abode and the Hereafter over this world. If you see that you stand a chance then attack, otherwise return.

Dirâr ﷺ : Ibn al-Walîd, what joy! You have made me more happy today than I have ever been. In fact, if you permit, I shall do this work on my own.

Khâlid ﷺ : You are indeed very brave, clever and energetic but it would amount to suicide if you do not take the help I am giving you and Allâh has forbidden this.

23) Dirâr's ﷺ expedition

Dirâr ﷺ armed himself and was in a hurry to set off, but Khâlid ﷺ said to him, "For Allâh's sake have mercy on yourself and have patience until the squadron is ready."

Dirâr ﷺ replied, "By Allâh! I cannot wait any longer. Whoever considers Jihâd to be the best virtue can come and join me there."

So saying, he sped off until he reached Bayt Luhyâ where he waited until his companions arrived. When their numbers were completed, they saw the Roman army wearing glittering armour like a swarm of locusts descending from the mountain, so numerous as if they were clothing the mountain with their presence. The Sahâbah ﷺ said to Dirâr ﷺ, "By Allâh! What a large army. It is better that we return."

Dirâr ﷺ : By Allâh! I will fight in the Path of Allâh treading the path of those who have turned towards Him. Allâh will not find me turning my back and running away, for He Himself says,

فَلَا تُوَلُّوهُمُ ٱلْأَدْبَارَ

...Do not turn your backs (to flee) from them. [8:16]

So when He has ordered this and I return, I will be disobeying him and will be a sinner.

Râfi' bin 'Umayrah : O my people, what is there to fear from these irreligious people? Has Allâh not granted you victory in most places? Have not our small forces repelled their gigantic numbers? Victory only comes with patience. So follow the ancient pious ones by crying with all humility in front of the court of the Lord of all the Worlds, recite the du'â of King Saul's companions when they faced Goliath:

رَبَّنَآ أَفۡرِغۡ عَلَيۡنَا صَبۡرٗا وَثَبِّتۡ أَقۡدَامَنَا
وَٱنصُرۡنَا عَلَى ٱلۡقَوۡمِ ٱلۡكَٰفِرِينَ

Our Rabb! Shower us with patience, make our feet firm and assist us against the Disbelievers. [2:250]

Also, recite from the Qurân:

....كَم مِّن فِئَةٖ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتۡ فِئَةٗ كَثِيرَةَۢ بِإِذۡنِ ٱللَّهِۗ
وَٱللَّهُ مَعَ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ

How many a small band defeated a massive army with Allâh's help? And Allâh is with the patient ones. [2:249]

This speech emboldened them, so they said, "Allâh will not see us fleeing from the battle. We will definitely fight the Disbelievers."

Dirâr ؓ understood that they had preferred the Hereafter over the world and so ordered them to hide in ambush near Bayt Luhyâ. While bare-chested, he took a long spear and mounted an 'Arab horse to face the Romans.

Salâmah bin Khuwaylid narrates:

I was with Dirâr's ﷺ squadron, when bare-chested, he mounted his 'Arabian horse desiring martyrdom. He advanced and attacked the Romans shouting, "Allâhu Akbar!"

The Muslims responded with shouts of, "Allâhu Akbar!" which terrified the Christians. I saw Dirâr ﷺ riding towards the Roman vanguard where Warden was stationed with crosses and flags erected near him and a band of warriors encircled him. They were just as willing to shed their blood for him as they were willing to shed their sweat for him. Dirâr ﷺ recognised him to be the general and so challenged the vanguard soldiers, "Is there any challenger?" and then recklessly moved to attack the centre-wing. Taking careful aim, he pierced the mounted flag-bearer with his lance. The Roman lost the flag and fell beneath his horse. Dirâr ﷺ then turned to the right and slew a Roman. Returning his gaze to the centre he saw Warden. Near Warden there sat a Roman on a dirty white mongrel horse carrying a jewel-encrusted cross. Dirâr ﷺ speared him in the side, reaching his intestines. The cross fell to the ground while the bearer reeled and went to Hell. Warden saw this as an omen of his own destruction and so dismounted to pick up the cross. Some Muslims hastily dismounted and encircled the cross, thus preventing him from reaching it. Dirâr ﷺ shouted, "O Muslims! Neither I nor you are yet entitled to that cross so do not have any desire to pick it up. I will pick it up myself after I have finished off this Roman dog and his army."

Warden understood 'Arabic and so wanted to flee when he heard these words, but the officers said, "Where are you fleeing to, O our general?"

Warden replied, "I am fleeing out of fear of that devil. What a disgusting sight he is. Have you ever seen anything more ugly and fearful than that?"

The narrator reports that when Dirâr ﷺ saw him turning his back, he understood that he was fleeing. So shouting loudly at the Muslims, he straightened his spear and spurred his horse. He was close to reaching Warden, when the Romans attacked so fiercely that his horse was stopped. At that time he was reciting this poem:

الموت حق أين لي منه المفر   وجنة الفردوس خير المستقرِ
هذا قتالي فاشهدوا يا من حضر   وكل هذا في رضا رب البشر

Death is a reality, there is no escape I can devise
Far better than Hell-fire is Firdaws–Paradise.
This is my martyrdom so bear witness
That all this I have done for Allâh's happiness!

He scattered the Romans and continued in pursuit of the general but the Romans pursued him until they gradually managed to surround him. He attacked in all directions terminating the breath of whichever irritant he speared and felling whichever warrior approached him. Thus he returned most of them to the Earth and sent them to eternal sleep. Then he called out to the Muslims:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلَّذِينَ يُقَـٰتِلُونَ فِى سَبِيلِهِۦ صَفًّا كَأَنَّهُم بُنْيَـٰنٌ مَّرْصُوصٌ

Verily Allâh loves those who fight in His Path in rows as if they are a single solid structure. [61:4]

Before any Muslim could respond, the Romans began rushing to him with great noise with the Muslims following and fighting. Warden's son Hamran, shot an arrow into D̲irâr's ﷺ right-hand side, paining him and disabling his hand. Like an uncontrollable lion, D̲irâr ﷺ pounced and thrust his spear into Hamran's chest, piercing his heart. As he withdrew the spear, the point snapped, staying firm in the vertebrae. Seeing the spear pointless, the Romans surrounded him and, at last, managed to subdue him.

24) The mysterious warrior

The Sahâbah took Dirâr's capture very hard and launched a fierce attack to save him but were unsuccessful. They were dislodged and started fleeing when Râfi' bin 'Umayrah shouted, "Memorisers and bearers of the Qurân, where are you going? Do you not know that those who flee out of fear of the enemy are showered with Allâh's anger and with defeat? That most of the gates of Paradise are open for Mujâhidîn and patient ones? O bearers of this Dîn, be patient and attack the worshippers of the cross. Bear in mind that even if your leader has been captured, Allâh is still Ever- Living and watching you and I am present to take the lead in front of you." The Muslims

were galvanised and gathered under his leadership. They launched an attack in which many men and most of the Roman leaders were killed. When Khâlid ﷺ heard about Dirâr's ﷺ capture and the Muslims' martyrdom, he was beside himself with grief and asked, "How many Romans are there?" The informer replied, "12,000."

Khâlid ﷺ : By Allâh! Had I known that they are so many then I would never have sent my people to destruction...Who is their general?

Informer : Warden, governor of Hims. Dirâr ﷺ killed his son, Hamran.

Khâlid ﷺ : There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except with Allâh's help, the Most High, the Most Mighty.

Then he sent a messenger to seek Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ opinion. His reply was, "Place a reliable man in charge of some men to continue the siege of the Eastern Gate while you yourself lead the attack on the enemy. I am confident that you will grind them like a mill in no time at all."

Upon receiving this message Khâlid ﷺ said, "By Allâh! I am not of those who are miserly in spending their lives in the Path of Allâh."

He then said to Maysarah bin Masrûq al-'Absî, "I am leaving you in charge of 1,000 horsemen. Do not leave your position, but make du'â and place your trust in Allâh."

Maysarah bin Masrûq al-'Absî : I accept wholeheartedly.

Khâlid ﷺ then addressed the army, "Let go of the horses' bridles and hold your spears firmly instead. When we are close to the enemy, then attack altogether. Perhaps we will rescue Dirâr if he is still alive or else if they have martyred him, we will certainly avenge him if Allâh wills. I hope that Allâh will not cause us grief with regard to Dirâr."

So saying, he rode ahead of his men reciting this war-poem:

اليوم فاز فيه من صدق   لا أرهب الموت إذا الموت طرقْ
لأروين الرمح من ذوي الحدق   لأمتكن البيض هتكًا والدرق
عسى أرى غدًا مقام من صدق   في جنّة الخلد وألقى من سبق

Today the truthful one will attain his goal
He is not afraid when death snatches his soul.
My spear's thirst quench will I
With blood flowing from the eye.
I will pierce both shield and helmet
And get that which yesterday the predecessors did get.

While he was reciting this poem, he suddenly saw a tall, short-necked fawn horse upon which sat a rider carrying a glittering spear. The rider's behaviour and appearance projected a kind of wisdom and the riding-style showed bravery. The warrior held the bridle loosely but sat firmly in the saddle and wore armour covered in black cloth. A green girdle tied at the waist was spread over both his chest and back. Thus this rider rode ahead of the army like a blazing flame.

Khâlid ﵁ said, "I wonder who this horseman is. By Allâh! He appears to be quite daring and brave."

He continued behind the stranger heading towards the Christian camp. Râfi' bin 'Umayrah was steadfastly holding out against the Romans when he saw Khâlid's ﵁ reinforcements. The mysterious warrior pounced on the enemy like a mighty hawk on a tiny sparrow in an attack that wreaked havoc in the Roman lines and by perpetrating a massacre penetrated to their very centre. It was like lightning striking the heads of two or four youths, then burning to ashes another five or seven and then flashing yet again. Reaching the centre, the warrior displayed clear signs of frustration and anxiety and then began attacking again, ripping the Christian lines apart and advancing until the Muslims lost sight of this champion who all the while was growing ever more anxious.

Râfi' bin 'Umayrah and his men thought that that could only be Khâlid ﵁. Râfi' then saw him with his men so he called out, "O brave one, who is this horseman who risks his life in Allâh's Path and slays the enemy without hesitation?"

Khâlid ﵁ : By Allâh! I do not know. I am myself astonished at his daring and bravery.

Râfi' : What an amazing man who penetrates the Roman ranks and kills them left, right and centre.

Khâlid ﵁ : O Muslims, rise for the defence of Islâm and attack together.

The Muslims straightened their bridles, readied their spears and advanced in battle-formation with Khâlid ﷺ in front. They were about to attack when they saw the stranger flashing at the heart of the Roman army soaked in blood and mounted on a horse drowning in perspiration. Despite trying to turn away from the approaching Romans, the Mujâhid was still single-handedly facing several Romans at the same time. Khâlid ﷺ and his men attacked them until they managed to bring the stranger to the Muslim ranks.

The Muslims gazed at the visible top part of the stranger's face and found it to be like a crimson rose-petal dipped in blood. Khâlid ﷺ said, "You have offered your life in the Path of Allâh and vented your anger upon the enemies – may Allâh reward you well. Now remove your mouth-cover so that we can see who you are."

The mysterious warrior ignored him and went into the crowd. The crowd grabbed him and said, "O slave of Allâh, the commander of the Islâmic armies speaks to you and you dare to ignore him. Go to him and tell him your name and lineage so that he can promote you."

They too received no reply, so Khâlid ﷺ personally went and said, "How very sad that I and in fact all the Muslims wish to know about you but you could not care. Who are you?"

He repeatedly insisted until eventually a feminine voice replied, "O commander, I have not avoided you out of disobedience, but out of modesty for I am of those who seclude themselves behind the veil. My sorrow and broken heart forced me here."

Khâlid ﷺ : Who are you?

Stranger : The captive Dirâr's sister, Khawlah bint al-Azwar. I was sitting with the women of the Mathhij tribe when I heard of Dirâr's capture. So I immediately mounted and came here. The rest you already know.

Hearing this, Khâlid's ﷺ heart was struck with wonder and tears welled out profusely.

Khâlid ﷺ : We will attack together. I have firm conviction that Allâh will let us reach your brother and free him.

Khawlah : If Allâh wills then I shall be in the front line.

25) Search for Dirâr ‎

'Âmir bin at-Tufayl narrates:

I was on Khâlid bin al-Walîd's right side and Khawlah was in front of him attacking. All the Muslims followed the attack. Khawlah put them to such difficulty that they started saying to each other, "If all the 'Arabs are as brave as this one then we will never be able to overcome them."

When Khâlid attacked, the Romans lost their wits and trembled. They were close to being dislodged but Warden started shouting, "My people, be careful and stand firm. If you stand firm, they will flee and the Damascenes will help us. So the Romans started putting up stiff resistance. But when Khâlid and his men attacked, their feet could not remain firm and they scattered in disorder.

Khâlid attempted to reach Warden but a group of brave warriors who circled their leader prevented him. The Muslims also spread out with Muslim and Christian engaged in single combat. Râfi' bin 'Umayrah displayed exceptional bravery while Khawlah broke through several ranks to reach the centre striking out in all directions. She was searching for her brother everywhere while loudly reciting this poem:

Where is Dirâr, him I do not see
While he does not see my tribe and family.
O my one and only brother
And son of my own mother,
You have ended my peace of mind
And now sleep I cannot find.

All the Muslims who heard this poem wept.

The battle continued but despite extensive searching, no sign of Dirâr was to be found. When the sun set, the two opposing forces returned to their own camps with the scales tipped in the Muslims' favour and the Romans suffering a heavy toll. The Muslim victory broke the Romans' hearts and they would have fled had it not been for their fear of Warden. Khawlah questioned each Muslim soldier in the camp about her brother, but none had seen him – dead or alive. When she had lost all hope, she began to weep bitterly and said, "O son of my mother! If only I had some news of you, even if it was that you were left lying in some jungle or slaughtered somewhere. May your sister be sacrificed for you. It is most saddening that I do not even know

if we will ever meet. By Allâh! You have left a burning ember in your sister's heart that will never cool. Now go and meet your father, the slayer of Disbelievers, in the presence of Muhammad ﷺ. I bid you continuous salâm until Judgement Day."

This mourning reduced the Muslims to tears.

Khâlid ؓ intended to launch another attack, but suddenly saw a group of Roman horsemen breaking off from the right-wing. They did not keep hold of their bridles and were coming in a hurry as if they were chasing something. Khâlid ؓ called the Muslims to arms and they swiftly gathered around him. When the Roman horsemen came near they threw down their arms and came on foot begging for safety. Khâlid ؓ ordered the Muslims to accept their plea and bring them to him.

Khâlid ؓ : Who are you?

Romans : We are soldiers of Warden and inhabitants of Hims. We are fully convinced that we can bring no power against you and do not have the strength to defeat you. Grant us, our families and our children protection on the same terms which you have granted other cities. State whatever indemnity you want and our people will not oppose your terms.

Khâlid ؓ : We can only make an agreement once we have reached your city, not here. In the meantime, you will stay with us until Allâh makes a decision between us and the enemy.

He ordered them to be watched over and again spoke to them.

Khâlid ؓ : Do you know anything about our warrior who killed your general's son?

Romans : Are you asking about that bare-chested man who killed many of our men including the general's son?

Khâlid ؓ : Yes, that is him.

Romans : After his capture Warden put him on a mule and sent him with 100 horsemen to Hims. From there he will be sent to Heraclius to display his bravery.

Khâlid ؓ was pleased to hear this and summoned Râfi' bin 'Umayrah.

Khâlid ؓ : Râfi', you know this region's roads and mountain-passes well. Your planning and improvising helped us to easily cross the barren plains of such places as as-Samâwah. That is, when you kept the camels thirsty and then gave them to drink and tied their mouths shut so that you could slaughter ten daily to feed us and

give the horses to drink from the water that then came from the bellies of the camels until we reached Arakah. You are thus a very experienced man and a distinguished planner. 100 horsemen are taking Dirâr to Hims. I am appointing you to pick whoever you wish to go with you in pursuit of them. I feel that you will be able to catch up to them soon and rescue him. If you achieve this you will cause great happiness and will solve a great problem.

Râfi' : I readily accept.

He selected 100 horsemen and was about to depart when Khawlah found out. A wave of happiness swept her so she prepared her weapons and went to Khâlid ﷺ saying, "For the love of Muhammad ﷺ, send me with them so that I can be of assistance."

Khâlid ﷺ said to Râfi', "You are well aware of her bravery, so take her with you."

He happily took her along and left.

26) Dirâr's ﷺ rescue

Khawlah rode behind the men, who were riding in military formation, until they reached the Salamîyah Road. Râfi' looked around and could not find any signs of an army having passed by nor any signs of hoof-prints, so he said, "Glad tidings my friends! The enemy has not yet reached here." He then ordered them to hide in ambush in Wâdî al-Hayyât and while they were waiting they saw a dust-cloud coming. Râfi' declared, "O young sons of Islâm, be alert." The enemy approached with Dirâr ﷺ in their centre reciting this poem:

Give this message to Khawlah and my family, O informer.
My hands are tied behind my back – I am a prisoner.
The Syrians surround me each a disbeliever
All of them are wearing armour.
O heart, sorrow and regret have made you dead
O tears of my manhood, down my cheeks you are shed.
Do you know if ever I will see Khawlah and my family too
And remind her of the agreement between us two?

Khawlah shouted from her hiding place, "Allâh has accepted your du'â and heard your plea. I am your sister, Khawlah!" She then came charging out shouting, "Allâhu Akbar!" followed by Râfi' and the rest all shouting "Allâhu Akbar!"

Humayd bin Sâlim narrates:

I was part of that force who, when we started raising our voices with, "Allâhu Akbar! Allâhu Akbar!", Allâh inspired our horses to start neighing loudly. Each of us targeted a Roman and in a short while finished them off. Allâh freed Dirâr ﷺ and granted us the Romans' horses and weapons.

Râfi' bin Qâdim narrates:

While we were engaging the Romans, Khawlah rescued her brother, untied him and made salâm. He congratulated and welcomed her and then mounted a horse which was roaming around. He picked up a spear and recited the following poem:

O Rabb! I thank You for accepting my prayer
You have removed my sorrow, worry and care.
You have fulfilled my desires and united my sister with me
Today my heart will be satisfied against the enemy.

While Râfi' bin 'Umayrah was gathering the booty, Khâlid ﷺ scored a resounding victory against the Romans. They began fleeing in such terror and loss of spirit that those in front did not even glance back at those behind them. Râfi' saw them and understood what was happening. As they came he casually started arresting them one by one.

After Khâlid ﷺ had despatched Râfi', he launched an attack in which it seemed as if every Muslim was madly rushing towards martyrdom. The Romans immediately turned tail and fled, with Warden taking the unchallenged lead. The Muslims pursued them gathering booty, weapons and horses until they met Râfi' and Dirâr ﷺ at Wâdî al-Hayyât. Khâlid ﷺ congratulated Dirâr ﷺ and thanked and praised Râfi'. Overjoyed, they returned to Damascus, where they informed Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ of their victory. The conquest of Damascus was now a certainty.

27) Heraclius's letter to Warden

When Heraclius heard of the Roman defeat and the great death-toll, he felt certain that his empire was coming to an end, so he wrote the following letter to Warden:

> *"I have been informed that a group of naked, hungry 'Arabs have defeated you and slain your son. Jesus showed no pity to*

you nor to your son. Were it not for the fact that I know you to be an expert horseman, lancer and swordsman, I would have had you executed. In any case, whatever has happened has happened. I have sent an army of 90,000 to Ajnâdayn. You are to go and take command of them and lead them to assist the people of Damascus. Send a detachment to fight the 'Arabs in Palestine, separate them from the 'Arabs at Damascus. Defend your religion and people."

Warden cheered up and prepared for travel. When he reached Ajnâdayn, he found the Romans in a state of great pomp, displaying their crosses. They came out to welcome him and offered condolences for his son. When he reached the tents, he read out Heraclius's order which they readily accepted and prepared for war.

28) Muslims receive intelligence on Ajnâdayn

Khâlid ﵁ returned to the Eastern Gate after the victory where he met 'Abbad bin Sa'îd. Shurahbîl ﵁ had sent him from Busrâ to inform Khâlid ﵁ of the 90,000 Romans sent to Ajnâdayn. Khâlid ﵁ went to Abû 'Ubaydah ﵁ and said, "O trustworthy one of the Ummah, this is 'Abbâd bin Sa'îd al-Hadramî. Shurahbîl sent him to inform me that Heraclius has sent 90,000 men to Ajnâdayn under the command of Warden. What is your opinion?

Abû 'Ubaydah ﵁ : Abû Sulaymân, our top generals are all scattered – Shurahbîl is in Busrâ, Mu'âth bin Jabal is in Hawrân, Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân is in Balqâ, Nu'mân bin Mughîrah is in Palmyra and 'Amr bin al-Âs is in Palestine. Write to them, summoning them to us so that we can mount a joint attack. Thereafter, safety and help are in the Hands of Allâh.

Khâlid ﵁ therefore wrote the following letter to 'Amr ﵁:

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Your Muslim brothers intend going to Ajnâdayn because there are 90,000 Disbelievers there who desire to extinguish Allâh's Light, but Allâh will complete His Light even if the Disbelievers dislike it. Therefore take your entire force and go to Ajnâdayn

where we will meet each other if Allâh wills. Convey my salâm to all Muslims.

Was-Salâmu 'Alayka.

Thereafter, he wrote similar instructions to all the above mentioned generals.

29) Paulus and his wife

Khâlid ﷺ gave orders for marching, so the tents were loaded onto camels while the sheep and booty were set aside. Khâlid ﷺ said to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "I intend to stay at the rear-guard with the sheep, women and booty. You take the special Sahâbah on reconnaissance."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : It is better if I take the rear-guard and you the vanguard so that if you come across Warden, he will be terrified at the sight of you. Therefore do not stay with the women and goods.

Khâlid ﷺ : Very well, I will not oppose you.

Before leaving he addressed the Muslims as follows, "O people! You are going towards a massive force, but be brave, love death and work towards whatever Allâh has decreed. He has promised victory and says in the Qurân:

....كَم مِّن فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ
وَٱللَّهُ مَعَ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ

How often a small group overcame a mighty force with Allâh's leave? And Allâh is with the patient ones. [2:249]

Thereafter, the army marched ahead, leaving Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ stationed at Damascus with 1,000 cavalry. The people of Damascus were overjoyed, thinking that the Muslims were fleeing in terror of the Ajnâdayn army. However some intelligent ones cautioned that if they took the Ba'labakk route, then they intended to attack Ba'labakk and Hims and if they took the Marjash-Shahûrâ and Râhit Highway then it meant that they were fleeing back to al-Hijâz and abandoning whatever they had conquered.

A great general, Paulus, son of Balca, was at Damascus. The Christians venerated him to such an extent that even Heraclius would summon him to deal with difficult embassies. An unrivalled archer – he had shot an arrow right into a massive stout tree in his garden. The arrow was still there and he wrote on the tree, "Whoever claims to be a great warrior must shoot an arrow from the other side which must enter the tree!" This was a much talked about incident amongst the commoners.

Paulus had not engaged in any combat against the S̲âh̲âbâh ﷺ since their invasion of Syria. When they withdrew, the inhabitants went to see him.

Paulus : Why have you come?

Damascenes : The 'Arab withdrawal is a golden opportunity for you to permanently establish your prestige with Heraclius and the Syrians. Accompany us to capture any stragglers we might find, or if you feel yourself capable, we can attack them.

Paulus : The only thing that has prevented me from fighting them is your cowardice and also I see no reason to fight them.

Damascenes : We swear in the name of Christ and the Bible that we will stay with you until the last breath. None will desert. If anyone does, then feel free to kill him.

Because of their oath, Paulus went inside his house and put on his armour to join them. Seeing this, his wife asked, "Where are you going?"

Paulus : The people of Damascus have put me in charge of them. I am leading them against the 'Arabs.

Wife : Do not do it! Stay at home and do not go needlessly against that which you are powerless against. I dreamt last night that you were holding a bow in your hand. You shot at sparrows in the sky. Some fell down wounded but then started flying again. I was amazed at them flying again when suddenly a group of eagles swooped down on you and your companions and scratched all your faces with their talons. You and your men then fled, but whoever had been scratched fell down unconscious. This sight frightened me and I awoke, fearful for your sake.

Paulus : Was I also unconscious in your dream?

Wife : I swear by God that I saw an eagle violently pecking you unconscious.

Thereupon Paulus gave her a hard smack.

Paulus : You foretell no good. Does fear of the 'Arabs sit so firmly in your heart that you now dream of them? Have no fear. I shall make their commander your attendant and his companions shepherds and pigheads.

Wife : It is your choice, I have given my advice.

Paulus ignored her and left riding accompanied by 6,000 cavalry and 10,000 infantry from Damascus, all of them highly experienced. Khâlid ﷺ had withdrawn the army, so Paulus targeted Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who was with the women, children and booty.

30) The Battle of Shakhûrâ

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and his men were mounted on camels when one of them saw a dust-cloud rising in the distance. He informed him and said, "As far as I can tell it is the dust of the enemy."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ replied, "It is certainly the Damascenes, who seeing us few in number, have come to attack us." He waited until the women's litters and the sheep had all arrived. At the same time, the dust was increasing and voices rising. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called out, "O Muslims, be alert. The enemy have arrived." He had hardly said this when the enemy descended upon them like pitch black darkness. Paulus was leading the 6,000 strong cavalry. When he saw Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, he led them against him. Simultaneously, his brother, Peter, led the infantry to the women where he captured some and then headed back for Damascus. When he reached the Istiryâq River, he stopped to receive news on Paulus.

When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ saw this disaster he said, "Khâlid was right in wanting to stay." Paulus advanced with marks and crosses hanging on his head. At that time, the Muslim women were very anxious while the boys were shrieking. Although 1,000 men were present, they had left to engage the Romans. Allâh's enemy, Paulus, attacked Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who fought back. The battle between the Sahâbâh ﷺ and the Romans heated, dust was rising, swords were flashing so viciously that Shakhûrâ became a bed of tulips (fallen heads like tulips red with blood? – *translator's note*). Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was in a difficult situation, but remained firm.

Suhayl bin Sabbâh narrates:

I was riding a Yamanî horse with white marks on its forehead and legs. I pulled the reins and let go so that it sped like a flash of lightning and, before I knew it, was close

to Khâlid bin al-Walîd. I shouted at him, so he turned his horse in my direction and said, "What is wrong, Ibn Sabbâh?"

I said, "O commander, go to Abû 'Ubaydah and the women. An army from Damascus has attacked them and captured some women and children. Abû 'Ubaydah is in a very tight situation and cannot hold out much longer." He exclaimed, "Verily we belong to Allâh and to Him we return. By Allâh! I wanted to stay at the back, but he did not listen. But in any case, none can question Allâh's decree."

He then ordered Râfi' bin 'Umayrah to immediately take 1,000 cavalry to protect the women and ordered 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr to take 1,000 cavalry against the enemy. Then he despatched Dirâr ﷺ and Qays bin Hubayrah al-Murâdî with 1,000 men against them. Thereafter, he went forth with the rest of the army. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was fighting Paulus when the Muslims arrived. They attacked the enemies of Allâh so forcefully that their crosses fell and they were convinced that they would be defeated. When Paulus saw Dirâr ﷺ blazing towards him, he lost his wits and shivered because he had personally seen from the top of the city walls what had happened to great warriors like Calius and Uriel and what had happened at Bayt Luhyâ. He recognised Dirâr and said to Abû 'Ubaydah, "O 'Arab, I ask you for the sake of your religion to keep this devil away from me." Dirâr said, "If I do not try to catch you, then I will be a devil."

Paulus, seeing him thrusting his spear in his direction, jumped off his horse and ran towards his army. Dirâr ﷺ also dismounted to chase him and shouted, "Where can you flee to when this devil is right behind you?"

Paulus said, "Spare me, O bedouin, for in sparing my life you will be saving your women and children." So Dirâr ﷺ spared him and arrested him instead, while the Muslims launched such an attack which silenced the Romans.

Mâjid bin Ruwaym al-'Aynî narrates:

I was in the army of 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr at the battle of Shakhûrâ. We surrounded the 6,000 Romans and massacred them.

Rifâ'ah bin Qays narrates:

As far as we know, only 100 out of the 6,000 survived. It is reported that Dirâr ﷺ was very upset to hear that his sister was captured and so went to Khâlid ﷺ and

informed him. He replied, "Do not worry, we have captured their leaders. We shall go to Damascus and free our women in exchange for the prisoners."

Then he said to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "You move slowly with the women while I go and free the captives." He selected 2,000 horsemen to go with him while despatching the rest with Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ for fear of an encounter with Warden.

Râfi' bin 'Umayrah, Maysarah bin Masrûq al-'Absi, Dirâr and other chiefs ﷺ rode ahead of Khâlid ﷺ and they soon traversed the distance.

Dirâr ﷺ was reciting this poem as they were going:

O Rabb remove that from which we suffer
Do not grant me death before I see my sister.
This is my desire and wish so
Come my friends, with me to the foe.
Then my intention will find completion
If I survive (unsuccessful) shave my beard (in humiliation).

Khâlid ﷺ laughed at this.

They continued until they neared the Istiryâq River where they saw a dust-cloud wherein flags fluttered and swords glittered.

Khâlid ﷺ : This is a strange sight.

Qays : Perhaps it is the remainder of the Damascus cavalry.

Khâlid ﷺ : Everyone keep your spears ready until we find out what is happening.

They obeyed and went ahead.

31) Bravery of the Muslim women

Peter gathered the Muslim women at the river. He regarded Khawlah bint al-Azwar as the most beautiful and said to his men, "She is mine and I am hers. None of you should object." They accepted and so each one started choosing a woman and saying, "She is mine." They gathered the sheep and loot and awaited Paulus. The women were detained in a tent. Most of them were aged women from the tribes of Himyar, 'Amâliqah and Tubba, who were used to riding at night and fighting 'Arab tribesmen. Khawlah addressed them, "O daughters of Himyar! O valuable ones of

Tubba'! Does it please you to be overcome by Roman Disbelievers and be their slave-girls? What has happened to that bravery which was the talk of the slave-girls of 'Arabs and gatherings of 'Arabs? How sad that I now see you bereft of all bravery and honour. I consider death better than the humiliation of serving Romans."

'Afirah bint 'Affâr al-Himyarîyah : Whatever you have mentioned, O daughter of Azwar, about our bravery, intelligence and rank is quite true. It is also true that we are accustomed to horse-riding and putting the enemy to difficulty at night. However, what can we do when we have neither horse, nor spear, nor sword, nor any other weapon? You know very well that they came suddenly and caught us like lost sheep when we had no weapons.

Khawlah : O daughters of Tubba', your negligence is no excuse. We can uproot the pegs and pillars of the tent and attack the wretches therewith. Perhaps Allâh will grant us victory, or else at least we will attain martyrdom. In this way we will wipe the mark of disgrace from our foreheads.

'Afirah : By Allâh! What a wonderful and appropriate suggestion.

So each women uprooted a peg. Khawlah bound her waist and, putting a peg on her shoulder, went ahead followed by 'Afirah, Umm Abân bint 'Utbah, Salamah bint Nu'mân bin Muqirr and the others all shouting, "Is there any challenger?"

Khawlah began instructing this female army on battle formation, "Be like the links of a chain, never separate. May Allâh forbid that you separate, for then spears will pierce your breasts, swords will cut your necks, your skulls will be cut off and heaped here. She went and hit her peg so hard on a Roman's head that he dropped down dead. The Romans were thrown into confusion and started asking each other, "What is happening?", when suddenly they saw peg-carrying women advancing upon them. Peter shrieked at them, "What are you doing, you wretches?"

'Afirah replied, "We have decided that today we willl rectify your brains with these tent-pegs and shorten your life-spans, thus removing a spot of disgrace from our ancestors' faces."

Peter laughed and said to his people, "Shame on you. Go, spread out and catch them alive, but whoever catches Khawlah should not get any ideas."

The Romans encircled them, but as soon as anyone came near, the women would break his horse's legs with the pegs and when he thus fell down, would smash up his face. In this way, thirty Romans were killed and none neared them. Peter became infuriated and followed by his companions, dismounted. They walked to the women

shaking their fists and swords. The women hurried towards each other and said, "Death with honour is better than life with disgrace."

Peter expended great effort in fighting the women but achieved nothing except frustration. He saw Khawlah like a fierce lion reciting the following poem:

نحن بنات تبع وحمير   وضربنا في القوم ليس ينكر
لأننا في الحرب نار تسعر   اليوم تسقون العذاب الأكبر

Himyar's and Tubba's daughters are we
For us to kill you is quite easy.
For we are the flames of war
We have for you great trouble in store.

Peter listened to her. Her beauty enticed him. He said, "O my 'Arab woman, stop this now. I value you and will tell you my heart's secret which is sure to please you – will it not please you that I be your master considering the fact that I am the object of desire of every Christian woman. In addition, I have farms, orchards, wealth and cattle and hold a prestigious position with Heraclius. All this will be yours if only you stop destroying yourself with your own hands." Khawlah retorted, "You wretched unbelieving son of an unchaste adulterer! By Allâh! I will take this peg and gouge your brains out. You are not even worthy of herding my camels and sheep let alone claim to be my equal." Peter became enraged and said to the Christians, "What greater shame can there be in all Syria and 'Arabia if a group of women manage to overcome you. Fear Jesus Christ and Caesar Heraclius and kill them all."

The Christians became excited and attacked. The Muslim women patiently faced the attack until they saw Khâlid's ؓ men kicking up dust, their swords glittering therein. Khâlid ؓ stopped at a distance and said to his men, "Who will go and gather information for me?"

Râfi' bin 'Umayrah volunteered and went and returned to report on the women defending themselves.

Khâlid ؓ : It is amazing! These are the women of the tribes of 'Amâliqah and Tubba. Some are of Tubba' bin Aqran, some of Tubba' bin Abî Karb, some of Thu Ra'în, some of 'Abdul Kalâ'al-Mu'azhzham and some of Tubba' bin Hassân bin Tubba'. Tubba' bin Hassân bin Tubba' was the man who bore witness to Muhammad ﷺ being a Prophet before he was born. He said in his poem:

شهدت بأحمد أنه رسول من الله بارىء كل النسم
وأمته سميت في الزبور بأمة أحمد خير الأمم
فلو مد عمري إلى عصره لكنت وزيرًا له وابن عم

That Ahmad is Allâh's Messenger is my testification
His Ummah is named in the Psalms as Best Nation.
If I live until his time serve him I will
And be minister to the son of his uncle.

O Râfi', these women are known for their fighting. If they are really displaying such feats of bravery which you describe, then they will permanently put their stamp on the 'Arabs and will remove the brand of weakness from the foreheads of females.

The Muslims' faces brightened with joy at Râfi''s report on the women's bravery and Dirâr ﷺ leapt with joy. He threw off the old shawl he was wearing and grabbed his spear, intending to be the first to reach them, but Khâlid ﷺ called out, "Wait a while Dirâr, do not be hasty. He who does a job with patience completes it, while he who hastens hardly achieves more than intentions."

Dirâr ﷺ : O commander, how can I be patient in helping my sister?

Khâlid ﷺ : If Allâh wills, help and victory is at hand.

He then lined up the horses, raised the flag and going to the centre, said, "O Muslims! When you approach the enemy spread out and surround them. Have trust in Allâh that He will free our women and have mercy on our children."

They cheerfully answered him and so he rode at their head.

The Christians were preoccupied with the women when the army arrived with flags fluttering. Khawlah called out, "O daughters of Tubba', Allâh has shown mercy to you and has gladdened your hearts."

When Peter saw the Islâmic army arriving with all its splendour, with their spears all aligned and swords flashing, his heart trembled and his shoulders shook. The men were alarmed and looked at each other. Peter said to the women, "Since we also have daughters-in-law, daughters, mothers, sisters and aunts, my heart has been filled with love and pity for you. For the sake of the Cross I free you. When your men arrive you can tell them this."

He grabbed his horse's bridle intending to flee but before the horse could start galloping, he saw two riders coming from the Muslims towards him. One was wearing armour while the other was bare-chested, riding an 'Arab horse bare-back and carrying a spear. The first was Khâlid ؓ, the second Dirâr ؓ.

When Khawlah saw her brother, she shouted, "Where were you all this time, my brother? Allâh has made us independant of your help."

Peter then shouted at her, "Go to your brother even if it will break my heart, but I hand you over to him."

He then wanted to leave, but she went to him and said, "That you (supposedly) extend your hand in harmony and then we turn away from you is not the way of us 'Arabs. You are but a slave of your desires and seekers of pleasure." She then went right in front of him.

Peter : My love for you has left my heart. I do not want to see your face.

Khawlah : O but *I* cannot ever let go of you!

She then rushed at him, while Khâlid ؓ and Dirâr ؓ came to join her, with the whole army coming in that direction.

Peter : O 'Arab, take your sister. Congratulations, I give her to you.

Dirâr : Very well, I accept, but at the moment I have nothing to give in exchange except the point of the spear. So take it.

وَإِذَا حُيِّيتُم بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَآ أَوْ رُدُّوهَآ

When you are greeted with a greeting, greet back better than that or at least return it equally. [4:86]

He attacked and struck at his heart while Khawlah struck the horse's leg. Dizzy, it fell down and Allâh's enemy was about to fall on the ground when Dirâr stabbed him in the side, the point wriggling from place to place until he fell down on the ground dead. Khâlid ؓ shouted, "Congratulations. This is such a spear whose owner is never unsuccessful." Meanwhile, the Muslims had surrounded the Romans and killed 3,000.

H̲âmid bin 'Awn ar-Raba'î narrates:

I counted that D̲irâr killed thirty, while his sister also killed many with her peg. I saw 'Afîrah bin 'Affâr fight more fiercely than I had ever seen her fighting before. The Muslims pursued the surviving Romans right up to Damascus. None came out to help them, instead they grew even more afraid than before. The Muslims returned, gathering booty, horses and weapons. Khâlid ﷺ called out, "O people, hurry back to Abû 'Ubaydah before Warden reaches him."

D̲irâr ﷺ had mounted Peter's head on his spear. The Muslims marched until they reached the camp at Marj ar-Râhit̲ where Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had stopped. His army raised loud cries of "Allâhu Akbar!" followed by Khâlid's men responding similarly. The two leaders then met and made salâm. The Muslims were happy to see the women and were overjoyed at the report that was heard. It was thought that Allâh's help was with them and that the conquest of Syria was now a certainty. Thereafter Khâlid ﷺ summoned Paulus.

Khâlid ﷺ : Accept Islâm or suffer the same fate as your brother.

Paulus : What has happened to him?

Khâlid ﷺ : He has been killed. In fact, his head is here.

He called for the head which he put in front of Paulus who wept.

Paulus : There is no pleasure left in life after my brother's death. Let me meet him.

Musayyib bin Najîyah al-Fazârî stood up and upon receiving the order, struck off Paulus' head. The Muslims then left.

32) Sahâbah ﷺ reach Ajnâdayn

It is narrated that when Shurah̲bîl, Mu'ât̲h̲ bin Jabal, Yazîd bin Abî Sufyan and 'Amr bin al-'Âs̲ ﷺ received Khâlid's ﷺ instructions, they immediately left with their armies for Ajnâdayn and arrived there.

Safînah ﷺ, the servant of Rasûlullâh ﷺ narrates:

I was with Mu'ât̲h̲ bin Jabal when we and the other Muslim armies all arrived at the same time at Ajnâdayn in the beginning of Jumadâ al-Ûlâ, 13 Hijrî and made salâm to each other. I saw a huge Roman army. When they saw us, they paraded before us.

They lined up their infantry and cavalry who were spread out in the field of Ajnâdayn - there were ninety rows with 1,000 men in each row.

Dahhak bin 'Urwah ﷺ narrates:

I had gone to 'Irâq and had seen the armies of Kisrâ and Jarâmiqah but, by Allâh, I had never seen an army as huge and as well-armed as that Roman army. We encamped there and the next day when it was barely daylight, the Romans started moving in our direction. When we saw them, we went on alert and started preparing. Khâlid ﷺ came to us on horseback and said, "O Muslims, you will never again see an army as huge as the one you are facing today. If you defeat them then no similar army will be able to face you until the Day of Judgement. Expend your life in the way of Jihâd and in defence of the honour of Allâh's Dîn. Beware of deserting, for it is tantamount to flinging yourself into Hell. Stand shoulder-to-shoulder, wave your swords but do not attack until I tell you to. Keep your spirits high."

Reliable narrators report that when Warden saw the Sahâbah ﷺ of Rasûlullâh ﷺ gathering for battle, he gathered all his officers and said, "O Romans, Heraclius has placed great trust in you. If you are defeated then there is no-one else who can face the 'Arabs. They will then conquer your cities, kill your men and capture your women. You must fight courageously and with unity. Remember that you are triple their number. Every three of you will face only one of them. Finally, seek help from the Cross for it will certainly help you."

Khâlid ﷺ faced the Muslims and said, "O warriors of Islâm, who will go and gather intelligence on the Roman numbers, strategies and equipment?"

Dirâr ﷺ : O commander, I am ready for this work.

Khâlid ﷺ : By Allâh! You are the very man, but when you reach there, do not needlessly entrap yourself for Allâh says:

وَلَا تُلْقُوا۟ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى ٱلتَّهْلُكَةِ

Do not fling yourselves into self-destruction. [2:195]

Dirâr ﷺ arrived there on horseback and witnessed great pomp, tents, glittering helmets and spears. Flags were fluttering like the wings of birds. Warden was examining the Muslims when suddenly he spotted Dirâr ﷺ and said to his officers,

"I have spotted a horseman about whom I am almost certain that he is one of their exalted chiefs. Who will go to catch him?"

Thirty youths went in pursuit. When Dirâr ﷺ saw them he turned back. They carried on chasing, thinking him to be fleeing, but his intention was to separate them from their army and then fight them. When they were far enough, he turned his horse and flung a small spear at one which instantly killed him. He then attacked a second youth and penetrated into their midst like a tiger. They were terrified and began fleeing, but he went after them killing them one by one until nineteen had been killed. Then as they neared the Roman camp, he turned back and reported to Khâlid ﷺ who said, "Did I not forbid you from showing off your strength and attacking them?"

Dirâr ﷺ : They were chasing me and I feared that Allâh would regard my action as fleeing. I therefore attacked them solely for His sake and I am sure that that is why He helped me. By Allâh! Had I not feared your reproach I would not have returned until I had attacked every single Roman. O commander, rest assured that their whole army will be our booty.

33) The Battle of Ajnâdayn

Khâlid ﷺ divided the army into four: right-wing, left-wing, centre and vanguard. Sa'îd bin 'Âmir was put in charge of the left-wing; Nu'mân bin Muqrin over the right vanguard; Shurahbîl ﷺ over the left vanguard; Mu'âth bin Jabal ﷺ over the right-wing while Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ was given 4,000 cavalry to protect the women and children at the back.

(The commander-in-charge would take the centre – translator's note)

Thereafter, he went to address the women amongst whom were those whose bravery was the talk of the 'Arabs such as 'Afîrah bint 'Affâr al-Himyarîyah, Umm Abân bint 'Utbah bin Rabî'ah who had just married and whose hands were still red with myrtle and head scented with perfume, Khawlah bint al-Azwar, Mazrû'ah bint 'Amlûq, Salamâ bint Zâri' bin 'Urwah, Laynâ bint Suwâr, Salamâ bint Nu'man and others.

Khâlid ﷺ : O daughters of Tubba', 'Amâliqah and the chiefs of the Persian kings, you have achieved such feats which have made Allâh and all the Muslims pleased with you, whose mention will keep your memories fresh, which have opened the gates of Paradise for you and have burnt your enemies. I am confident that if any Romans come here, you will kill them and if any Muslim deserts, you will have pegs

ready (to chase him back) and show him his children and say to him, "How can you abandon them?" It will be your job to continue encouraging the men to fight.

'Afirah : O commander, by Allâh! We will be more pleased if you put us in front to fight the Romans and break their faces. We will kill them until we are all martyred and none of us remain.

Khawlah : O commander, we are not concerned about anyone's attacks.

Khâlid ﷺ : May Allâh reward you well.

He then returned to the men, spurring his horse to inspect them and encouraged them in the way of Jihâd, "O Muslims, help the Dîn of Allâh and He will help you. Remain steadfast in battle defending your women, children and Dîn. Fight whole-heartedly for there is no refuge or fort to which you can flee, nor any trench in which you can hide. Stand shoulder-to-shoulder and unsheathe your swords but do not attack until I order you to. Observe this rule of archery - when you fire it must be as one so some target or other will be hit."

ٱصْبِرُوا۟ وَصَابِرُوا۟ وَرَابِطُوا۟ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

Endure; be more patient than the enemy; maintain your stations; and fear Allâh so that you can be successful. [3:200]

The Muslims were pleased with this speech. They proceeded to string their bows, stack their arrows, unsheathe their swords and make general battle preparations. He then went to the centre of the army where he stayed for a while with 'Amr bin al-'Âs, 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr, Qays bin Hubayrah, Râfi' bin 'Umayrah, Musayyib bin Najîyah, Thul Kalâ', Rabî'ah bin 'Âmir ﷺ and others. He then led the army in a slow advance towards the enemy.

Warden advanced with his forces when he saw the Muslims coming. The Romans filled the earth in every direction displaying flags and crosses and uttering words of disbelief. When the two armies faced each other, an aged Christian soldier wearing black armour accompanied by other Christians came out of the Roman ranks and approaching the Muslims, said in 'Arabic, "Who is your leader? I wish to speak to him."

Khâlid ﷺ came forward.

Priest : You are the leader?

Khâlid ﷺ : These people will accept me as their leader for as long as I am obedient to Allâh and maintain the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ. If I should stray for even a moment then I will have no obedience or leadership.

Priest : That is why you conquer us. If you stray even a little then you will never conquer. You have come to such lands which no king has had the audacity to come to before, let alone invade. The Persians have tried, but failed. The Jarâmiqah made great but fruitless sacrifices in their invasion attempts. Now you have come. You may have made a few conquests, but conquest is a temporary matter. Our general Warden has, out of his great compassion for you sent me with this message, "If you withdraw I will give each of your soldiers a turban, a set of clothing and a dînâr; you 100 dînâr and ten sets of clothing and for Abû Bakr 1,000 dînâr and 100 sets of clothing."

The number of our army is that of the number of an army of ants. Do not deceive yourself into thinking that you will defeat us like the previous armies, for Heraclius has sent unto us a great brave general and experienced priest.

Khâlid ﷺ : By Allâh! We cannot return unless you accept one of three choices: firstly, enter our religion, believe as we believe and say as we say. If not, your second choice is to pay us Jizyah and your final choice is to fight us. As for your numbers being like an army of ants, I say that Allâh has promised us victory through the tongue of His True Messenger, Muhammad ﷺ, and has also stated this promise in His Sacred Book. As for your turbans, clothing and dînâr, you will soon see that they and in fact your Empire will be in our hands anyway.

Priest : Very well, I will tell the general.

He then went and told Warden who said, "Does he foresee the same fate befalling us as befell those who fought them before? With our every delay their ambitions upon the Empire and spirits increase. Caesar has sent against them the great patricians and now the only delay is battle. Then we will abandon them trembling in blood and dirt." He then gave orders for military manoeuvres putting infantry carrying small spears and bows in front of the cavalry.

Mu'âth bin Jabal ﷺ saw this and called out, "O Muslims, paradise is ready. The Gates of Hell are shut. The virgin damsels are adorned and waiting for you. Receive tidings of eternal life."

'Inân bin 'Awf ﷺ narrates:

I was keeping count of each footman and horseman Dirâr was killing until the total reached thirty.

Zharîf bin Târiq al-Yarbu'î narrates:

He wreaked absolute havoc. His bravery and manliness really stunned them. He then removed his helmet and flung it away saying, "O Romans, I am Dirâr bin al-Azwar. Yesterday I was soft with you, today I am your enemy. I am he who killed Hamran, son of Warden. Whoever denies Allâh will find me to be like an incurable disease, I shall destroy him at any time, in any place."

The soldiers recognised him and began fleeing hurriedly with him in hot pursuit. Then when the Romans came against him, he turned back. Warden asked, "Who is this bedouin?" They said, "That is the same bedouin who fights bare-chested, sometimes with a spear, sometimes without." He took in a cold breath and said, "He is the one who decreased my family and killed my son. I say truly from the bottom of my heart that whoever takes revenge from him will get whatever he desires." A warrior of Arâhîyah quickly volunteered.

The narrator says, "That was the governor of Tiberias."

35) Dirâr ﷺ and Steven duel

Hilâl bin Murrah narrates:

I was in the right-wing, with Romanus, governor of Busrâ, at my left . He said to me, "I do not know his name, but I can tell you that he is a match for Dirâr." That man then said to Warden, "I will take revenge on your behalf," and rode off. The two opponents fought each other for more than three hours, both displaying great valour. Dirâr ﷺ eventually managed to pierce his armour with his spear and kill him, flinging him face-down. Warden then said, "He also failed to bring him, and even if he had brought him and I saw him with my own eyes then I would deny my own sight for certainly no human has the power to fight a devil. No, there is none besides me to fight this ugly thing." With these words, he dismounted his Turkish horse, put on armour and then a second pearl-encrusted coat of armour and a crown to awe Dirâr ﷺ. He mounted an 'Arab horse and was about to depart when Steven, governor of 'Ammân came, kissed the stirrup and said, "I am ready to take revenge on your

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ ٱشۡتَرَىٰ مِنَ ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمۡ
وَأَمۡوَٰلَهُم بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ ٱلۡجَنَّةَ

Verily Allâh has brought from the believers their lives and wealth in exchange for Paradise, They fight in the Path of Allâh. [9:111]

"May Allâh bless your attack."

Khâlid ﷜ : O Mu'âth, be patient until I give some instructions. O Muslims, stand shoulder to shoulder and remember that the enemy is double our number. Stretch the fighting until the time of Salâtul 'Âsr because that is the time in which our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ obtained victory over his enemies.

Beware of deserting for Allâh is watching you at all times. When you attack, then may your attack be with Allâh's blessing.

34) Dirâr's ﷜ valour

When the two armies faced each other, the Armenians started firing arrows, killing and wounding several Muslims, but they could not retaliate because of Khâlid's ﷜ instructions. Dirâr ﷜ said, "What are we waiting for? Allâh is watching us and showering us with His Light. Let the enemy not think that we are scared, cowardly or lax. Order the assault or else send some youth to engage them until you order the assault."

Khâlid ﷜ : Dirâr, you are the man for this job too.

Dirâr ﷜ : By Allâh! I would like nothing more than that.

He donned Paulus's armour and shut the face-guard. He also covered his horse with Peter's horse-cover and disguised himself as a Roman before heading in their direction. He managed to penetrate right into their ranks before attacking them with his small spear. The Romans started firing arrows and throwing stones at him, but not one hit Allâh's slave, who continued ripping their ranks apart until he had slain twenty footmen and twenty horsemen.

behalf against this wretch. Will you give me your daughter's hand in marriage if I kill or capture him?"

Warden : Most certainly, and I make the chiefs of Syria and Imperial officials my witnesses to this. Most probably, you do not need any more reliable witnesses?

Steven went out like a blazing fire to attack Dirâr ﷺ, saying, "O wretch! Take that which you cannot resist."

Dirâr ﷺ did not understand a word of his Greek language but prepared to attack back. Steven was wearing a gold cross tied to a silver chain. When Dirâr ﷺ saw him kissing it, he realised that he was seeking help from it, so he said, "If you seek help from that cross against me, then I seek help from that Being who answers du'â and comes close to he who calls out unto Him," and then attacked. The two exhibited such fighting skills which astounded everyone until Khâlid ﷺ shouted out, "O Ibn al-Azwar! What is this sluggishness and negligence? Why are you delaying when Hell is waiting for your opponent and Allâh is watching you? Avoid cowardice and attack like a man."

Dirâr ﷺ began shaking with enthusiasm in his saddle and renewed his attack.

The Romans were cheering Steven on while the two combatants were engrossed in the duel until the sun reached its peak and showered its fiery rays. The men began sweating and even their horses began sweating to their tails. Steven then made signs that they should dismount and fight on foot. Dirâr ﷺ was about to comply when he saw Steven's slave bringing his master an unmounted fresh horse, so he said to his horse, "Remain strong under me for a little while longer or else I will go and complain about you in front of the grave of Rasûlullâh ﷺ."

These words made the horse neigh and stamp the ground with its foreleg.

Dirâr ﷺ headed towards the slave and killed him with his spear. He mounted the new horse, sending his own back to the Muslims and returned to Steven. This scene convinced the Roman that his death was imminent. Dirâr ﷺ perceived these thoughts from his expression and was about to attack when he saw a squadron of horsemen approaching. When Warden had seen Steven's predicament he said to his men, "This devil is really irritating me. If I do not kill him today, I will be presenting myself for destruction. Now I will go and fight him even if the other leaders consider it a disgrace, but I do not care."

Ten armoured men followed him wearing leg-armour and side covers and carrying steel-maces. Steven was fighting hopelessly, but when he saw Warden coming

wearing a crown and armour, followed by the ten, his hopes rose. His spirits returned and so he shouted, “Prepare for combat!”

Dirâr however ignored his words and was not frightened at the new arrivals but got ready to fight them.

When Khâlid saw the crown he said, “Kings wear crowns. No doubt that he is in charge and is targeting our man, so let us go and help our man. Ten of you are needed to equal them.”

He selected ten men and went off to the battlefield.

In the meantime, the Romans had reached Dirâr who bravely managed to hold them off until Khâlid and his ten arrived and shouted, “O Dirâr, glad-tidings of Allâh’s help. Do not fear the Disbelievers.”

Dirâr : Is not Allâh’s help (always) near?

The Muslims encircled the Romans and then each Muslim targeted one Christian with Khâlid shouting at Warden,“Is there any challenger?”

Dirâr continued fighting Steven who was in a bad state, with his side paralysed and hands shaking. The sight of Khâlid made him senseless and turned his new-found joy into sorrow. He started looking around in all directions (for an escape) but his horse was completely immobile. Dirâr understood his situation and launched another attack. Steven jumped off his horse to escape the claws of death and ran. Dirâr jumped down and ran after him. When he was close enough, he threw down his spear and wrestled him. The two were grabbing each other’s faces and despite Steven being built like a solid rock and Dirâr being thin and frail, Allâh strengthened His slave until he managed to grab his belt near his navel, lift him up and then fling him down. Steven began shrieking, pleading for Warden to help him and said in Greek, “O commander! Save me from this situation in which I am trapped.”

Warden shouted back, “O wretch! And who is going to save me from these beasts?”

These shouts only encouraged Khâlid against Warden and Dirâr against Steven. Both armies were watching them, with the Romans shouting and lamenting and the Muslims shouting, “Allâhu Akbar! Allâhu Akbar!” Dirâr managed to defeat Steven and sit on his chest. The defeated Roman was murmuring like a camel.

The two Romans were unable to help each other. Dirâr then thrust his sword into Steven’s belly and began slitting him upwards. Steven shrieked so loudly in terror

that his cries reached the skies and both armies. The Romans ran to rescue him. Seeing this, Dirâr ﷺ thought that to remain would mean being needlessly crushed to death by the Roman horses, so proclaiming "Allâhu Akbar!", he hacked off Steven's head. The blood which then gushed out completely covered him as he again shouted, "Allâhu Akbar!" The Muslims then came charging shouting, "Allâhu Akbar!"

Mu'âth bin Jabal ﷺ attacked the right-wing and Sa'îd bin 'Âmir went for the left. The Armenians and Christian 'Arabs fired such a shower of arrows which hid the sun, so Sa'îd bin Zayd bin 'Âmir bin Nufayl ﷺ called out, "O people, remember your death. Do not make Hell compulsory upon you by fleeing in front of Allâh. O defenders of this Dîn! O readers of the Qurân, persevere!"

These words filled them with resolution and encouragement.

The two armies fought until the time of Salâtul Asr and then separated with heavy losses on both sides, but with Roman losses greater. The Muslim martyrs on the first day were: Salamah bin Hishâm al-Makhzûmî, Nu'mân al-'Adawî, Hishâm bin al-'Âs at-Taymî, Habbân bin Sufyân, 'Abdullâh bin 'Amr ad-Dawsî, Tharr bin 'Awf an-Namirî, Râ'b bin Rahîn al-Khazrajî, Qâdim bin Miqdam az-Zuhrî, Thul Yassâr bin Khazrajah at-Tamîmî, Hizâm bin Sâlim al-Ghanawî, Sa'îd bin al-'Âs Abî Laylâ al-Kilâbî, Hâdim bin Bashîr as-Saksakî, Umayyah bin Habîb bin Yassâr bin Ahad bin 'Abdillâh bin 'Abdidâr, Murhif bin Wâthiq al-Barbûjî, Mahallî bin Hanzhalah ath-Thaqafî, 'Adî bin Yassâr al-Asadî, Mâlik bin Nu'mân at-Tâî, Sâlim bin Talhah al-Ghiffârî and twelve commoners (non-Sahabah? - *translator's note*) whose names I (al-Wâqidî) do not know.

The Romans lost about 3,000 men including ten governors: 1) Steven, governor of 'Ammân province; 2) Marqash, son of Labnâ, governor of Damîn, Dayr al-Harb and Nawâ; 3) Damdar, son of Qâlâ, governor of Jawlân, that region which included the Cave of the Seven Sleepers; 4) Levi, son of Hana, governor of Black Mountain and 'Âmilah; 5) Mithâr'ûn, son of Remus, governor of Ghazzah; 6) Najâ, son of 'Abdul Masîh, governor of Halhûl; 7) Jarqiyâs, son of Jarwân, prince of Yânâwarmalah; 8) Maryûnus, governor of Balqâ; 9) Kûrak, viceroy of Nâbalus and 10) an unknown prince of al-'Awâsim.

When Warden returned to his camp, filled with terror at the Muslims, he summoned his officers for consultation.

Warden : O upholders of the Faith of Christ, how do you assess the 'Arabs? I see them as a conquering nation, unconquerable. Their swords are sharp and cutting while yours are blunt. Their horses are energetic and enduring while yours just pant.

Their arms are hard and yours sluggish. In addition they are more obedient to their Lord than you are and have truer faith. Through your oppression, sinning and conspiring we have become disgraceful. I am fully convinced that if you stay like that then all this wealth and power will depart from you. It is therefore necessary that you wash the rust from your hearts, confess your sins with a true heart and turn in repentance to God. If you do this, then victory will be at your feet or else you will be destroyed, for God has inflicted us with a nation who up until now had no importance, about whom we never bothered or even thought about because they are hungry and naked slaves and shepherds. They have fled from the drought and hardships of al-Hijâz and come to you. Here they are now enjoying the luxuries and fruit of your cities. Instead of barley and grain-bread, they now eat wheat-bread. Instead of vinegar and date-water they now partake of honey, butter-oil, fresh butter, figs, grapes and rare exotic things which have all fallen into their hands. To crown it all, they have taken your women, mothers and family. What I cannot understand is how you are tolerating this disgrace and disaster?

Not a single Roman remained who did not weep aloud and was not filled with regret. With anger overfilling they said, "We will fight until the last breath and remain firm until the last man. The 'Arabs can never be so brave. We will kill them with our swords, pierce them with our spears and fire them into pieces of chaff with our arrows. That which you have mentioned will not be."

36) The conspiracy

Warden was delighted with this answer and said to the patricians, "You have heard what the army has answered."

One of them replied, "O Warden, place no reliance on the words of commoners. Understand that you have become entangled with such a people against whom no success is possible. Have you not seen with your own eyes how a single one of them is prepared to take on a whole army, is not impressed by numbers and does not return until he has killed several of us? They firmly believe what their Prophet told them – that if they kill one of us he goes to Hell but if we kill one of them he goes to Paradise. For such people life and death are equal. They have killed many of us but we have killed only a few of them. Against such people I see no hope for you unless through some scheme you can reach their leader and kill him, for then they will be defeated and flee. However, to achieve that, a plan is needed."

Warden : What kind of scheme will work? These are people who specialise in schemes.

Patrician : Call him to have a dialogue, then when he is alone grab his throat and call out to men whom you had arranged to lay in ambush.

Warden : I can never reach him because firstly, he is a powerful, stern warrior; secondly, I cannot (bring myself to) speak to him; (thirdly), I will never be able to catch him.

Patrician : Do not worry, I will tell you of a plan which if you implement you will reach him without harm. Hide ten top warriors and then call him for talks. Sit with him near the ambush. Engross him in dialogue until he is completely at ease with you, then attack him. Call the others to help finish him off and then you will be relieved of his troubles. His men will automatically scatter until not even two will be seen together.

Warden was most delighted with this scheme and said, "Let us accomplish this work before morning ends."

He called a Christian Syrian from Hims called David and said, "I know you to be an extremely eloquent orator who is capable of proving the way of salvation and disproving the enemy. I want you to go to the 'Arabs and ask them to put off the battle until tomorrow. In addition, their commander should come to us at the crack of dawn so that I can personally negotiate peace with him. Possibly we can achieve peace, whatever money they want we will give them."

David : Alas, Caesar has sent you to fight the 'Arabs, but you make peace with them. The world will brand you as a frightened coward. Never until Judgement Day will I enter into peace negotiations with them, for then Caesar will execute me.

Warden : No, shame on you! This is my plan to get their commander so that I can kill him, resulting in their dispersion and massacre.

Then he explained the whole conspiracy to him.

David : O wrongdoer, conspiracy always ends in humiliation. It is better that you fight like a man with your army and abandon this scheme.

Warden (angry) : I am not asking for your opinion. I am ordering you to give my message. Do not oppose me.

David : Very well.

He left still opposing the plot in his heart and said to himself, "He speaks as if he wants to join his dead son." He paused near the Muslim camp and shouted, "O

'Arabs, has there not been enough bloodshed and killing? God will certainly question you about this. We should therefore come to an agreement and reach peace. Let your commander or his representative come out to speak to me."

37) David and Khâlid's ☙ dialogue

David had hardly finished speaking when the armoured Khâlid ☙ flashed out riding a splendid horse with his spear pointed between the horse's ears. The old Christian exclaimed, "O 'Arab, wait, be soft, I have not come for war. I am not even a soldier. I carry neither sword, nor spear. I am an envoy who has come to give you a message. So please put down your spear so that I can talk to you."

Khâlid ☙ put his spear in the saddlebow and approached David to say, "Do your job and give your message, but be honest and upright, for the truthful man stands at the gates of goodness while the liar falls into the pit of misguidance and is destroyed."

David : O 'Arab, you have spoken the truth. I am here because my commander dislikes bloodshed and does not wish to fight you good gentlemen and is deeply grieved at the deaths both sides have suffered. He therefore wishes to offer you a gift. You should shut the gates of bloodshed. You and your honourable companions should sign a treaty to the effect that you will not fight us, that you will not harbour any intentions against our cities and lands and no aggression will take place against our forts. If you do this, then we will take your word as reliable and will be pleased with your actions. He also desires that you stop all fighting for the rest of the day and then meet him alone first thing tomorrow morning so that the two of you can discuss the terms of the treaty. In this way, if God wills, some good might be achieved and the bloodshed stopped.

Khâlid ☙ thought for a while before replying, "If his words and reason for sending you harbour some kind of plot and scheme, then know that scheming is but a toy in my right hand – perhaps no-one has ever been born to match me in scheming. He speaks such matters which will take him to death's door. His treachery and scheming will lead to destruction and humiliation for him and his army. However, if he is sincere then, besides accepting Islâm or paying Jizyah, there is no other peaceful solution. As to his offer of money, I have no desire for it, except in the mentioned manner of Jizyah collectable at the beginning of each year."

David disliked these words but said, "It will be as you want, but when the two of you sit together a settlement will definitely be reached. In any case, permit me to leave now."

Khâlid's ؓ words scared David so he said to himself, "The 'Arab speaks the truth. Warden will be killed and then it will be our turn. It is better that I tell him the truth and seek amnesty for myself and my children."

He turned to Khâlid ؓ again and said, "O 'Arab brother, I have forgotten to tell you one thing which my master told me."

Khâlid ؓ : What is it?

David : Be alert and protect your life and property because Warden has conspired against you.

Then after telling him all the details, he said, "I ask your protection for myself and my family."

Khâlid ؓ : If you do not spy on us or betray us in anyway then your wealth, family and children are protected.

David : If I intended treachery then why should I have told you the whole story?

Khâlid ؓ : Which place has been selected for the ten Romans to hide in?

David : On the right-hand side of the army near the sand-hill.

He then took leave and left. Upon reaching Warden, he told him Khâlid's ؓ reply. Warden was pleased and said, "I am convinced that the Cross will grant me victory."

He then summoned ten warriors and ordered them to go on foot and hide in ambush.

In the meantime, Khâlid ؓ met Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ on his way back. When Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ saw him laughing, he asked, "O Abû Sulaymân, may Allâh keep you smiling. What is the matter?"

Khâlid ؓ told him the whole story.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : So what do you intend?

Khâlid ؓ : I am going alone.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : O Abû Sulaymân, I take oath that you are enough for them, but Allâh has ordered one not to present oneself for destruction. Instead He has commanded:

وَأَعِدُّوا۟ لَهُم مَّا ٱسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن قُوَّةٍ وَمِن رِّبَاطِ
ٱلْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِۦ عَدُوَّ ٱللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ

And make ready against them all you can of power and steeds of war to terrify the enemy of Allâh and your enemy. [8:60]

The enemy has readied ten men against you, so they total eleven. I will have no peace about this accursed man unless you too send ten men to hide near their ambush place, for without doubt the informer has shown you the place.

Khâlid ؓ : Yes, he did.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : So? Order ten soldiers to lay in ambush nearby. Then when the accursed calls his men, you call yours. If Allâh wills they will be sufficient. At the same time we will be waiting on our horses. Once you have disposed of Allâh's enemy we will attack the army. We hope that Allâh will grant us victory.

Khâlid ؓ : Very well, I can never oppose you.

He then summoned the following ten: 1) Râfi' bin 'Umayrah at-Tâî; 2) Musayyib bin Najîyah al-Fazârî; 3) Mu'âth bin Jabal; 4) Dirâr bin al-Azwar; 5) Sa'îd bin Zayd bin 'Âmr bin Nufayl al-'Adawî; 6) Sa'îd bin 'Âmir bin Jurayh; 7) Abân bin 'Uthmân bin Sa'îd; 8) Qays bin Hubayrah; 9) Zufar bin Sa'îd al-Bayâdî and 10) 'Adî bin Hâtim at-Tâî ؓ.

He told them of the Roman plot and said, "Go and hide in the low ground on the right-hand side of the hill. When I call out come and take on one Roman each, but leave Allâh's enemy, Warden, for me. If Allâh wills, I will be enough for him."

Dirâr ؓ : This is a delicate matter which might get out of hand. These people might prevent Warden from fighting and attack you all together and Allâh forbid, harm you. It is better that we go now to their ambush place and if we find them sleeping, we can finish them off before morning without fighting. We will then hide in their place until morning when you meet Warden and then come out.

Khâlid ؓ *(laughing)* : If this is possible then do it. Take these men over whom I appoint you commander and place your trust in Allâh that He will fulfil your desires. If you are successful then it will be a cause for rejoicing and a good sign.

Dirâr ﷺ : I have strong hope of getting them.

38) Fruits of treachery

They left the camp with swords drawn, bidding the Muslims salâm and making du'â. Their departure was when a quarter of the night had passed. Dirâr ﷺ walked in front reciting this poem:

In the darkness even the Jinn are afraid of me
In this work there is nothing new to me.
Regrets to them who deceive us in ambush they are laying
Whereas we are the very roots of planning and scheming.
When it comes to pleasing his Master
A brave man does not fear or falter.

When they approached the hill, Dirâr ﷺ ordered them to halt and said, "Wait here until I bring back news of the Romans." He disrobed and went slowly under the cover of the mountain and sand-hill with sword in hand. When he reached the Romans, he found them exhausted from the battle and thus all were sleeping and were not expecting an attack. He wanted to make their sleep more permanent but then thought, "Perhaps they will awaken each other during the chaos."

So he returned to his men and said, "Glad tidings! That which you hoped for is here and that which you feared is not. Unsheathe your swords and when you reach them kill them in any way you please. Each one will select one Roman and then everyone must kill his victim simultaneously. Also, avoid any noise as far as possible."

They replied, "Very well," took off their armour, unsheathed their swords and followed Dirâr ﷺ.

When they reached the enemy they readied their weapons, spread out and stood one each by each Roman. They raised their swords and then instead of awakening them, minced their necks, faces and stomachs. After the Muslims took all their weapons and goods, Dirâr ﷺ said, "Congratulations! This is the first victory and if Allâh wills more will follow."

The ten spent the whole night praising and thanking Allâh until the sky began brightening with dawn. They then undressed and put on the Romans' clothing and covered their faces with cloth, lest Warden should send someone who would

discover them and spoil the whole plan. They flung the corpses into a hole and then waited, weapons at hand.

39) Khâlid ﷺ and Warden's dialogue

After performing Salâtul Fajr, Khâlid ﷺ organised the army for battle. He dressed in reddish clothing and put on a yellow turban. The Romans too went into battle formation and raised their crosses aloft. A horseman emerged from their centre ranks and shouted, "O Arabs, what has happened to the agreement which we agreed to yesterday? Have you broken it?"

Khâlid ﷺ stepped forward and said, "We are not traitors."

Roman : Warden wishes you to come to him and engage in dialogue so that it can be seen what matters you agree on.

Khâlid ﷺ : Go and tell him that I am coming without delay or fear.

The messenger returned to tell Allâh's enemy, who donned highly decorated armour, throat-guard, helmet and crown and then departed. When Khâlid ﷺ saw him with all this splendour, he said, "If Allâh wills, then all that will be booty for the Muslims."

He then said to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "Dirâr has probably reached the enemy. When you see me attack, then order the army to attack."

He then bade the Muslims salâm and left reciting this poem:

O Allâh, I hand my matter over to You
If death is close then forgive me.
Guide me so that good works I do
If I am deficient then forgive me.
Polytheism with my sword I will cut
Until it is completely destroyed with my caress.
O Rabb of all the worlds! I have none but
You to call unto in the time of distress.

Nâqid bin 'Alqamah ar-Raînî narrates:

I was in the centre of the army with 'Ayyâd bin Ghanam when I heard Khâlid ‎ reciting poetry. When Allah's enemy, Warden, saw him and his clothing he was surprised and thought that he was coming to him. With this thought in mind, he went to the hill and dismounted his mule when he neared Khâlid ‎ who also dismounted his horse. They sat near the hill. Warden held his sword out of fear of Khâlid ‎ but Khâlid ‎ went to sit right in front of him.

Khâlid : Say whatever you want to, but speak the truth. Understand well that you are sitting in front of a man who is not bothered with the schemes and treachery of others for he is himself a rock of the fort of planning. In any case, say what you have to.

Warden : O Khâlid, the matter is between the two of us. Say what you want now and refrain from bloodshed. Remember that you will be accountable before God for all your actions and this senseless bloodshed. If it is the world that you desire and wealth that you need, we are generously prepared to give you charity and will not be miserly because we consider you to be the weakest of nations, suffering from drought and dying from starvation. Now say what is acceptable to you and be satisfied with what little we will give you.

Khâlid : O Christian dog, Allâh has made us independant of your charity and has permitted (the capture of) your wealth. We will divide your wealth amongst ourselves and (enslave) your wives and children. Of course if you recite, "*There is no deity but Allâh and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh*" you will become our brothers. If you refuse then you will have to pay Jizyah in a state of humiliation. If this is also not acceptable then the sword is the best decider between us. Allâh will grant victory to whomsoever He chooses. You have heard our offer with regard to you, if you reject this then we can fight, and by Allâh, we certainly love to fight. As for you regarding us as weaker than you - by Allâh, we regard you as equal to dogs. One thousand of you are weak against one of us. What you have mentioned are not the terms of surrender which those before you offered to us. If you regard me as a soft plump target and entertain false hopes because you see me far from my people, then do what you want. If Allâh wills I will be enough for you.

40) Death of Warden

Warden, relying on his men laying in ambush, jumped up without drawing his sword and grabbed Khâlid's two sides. Khâlid wrestled him and hit him on the side.

In the scuffle that ensued, Warden called out to his men, "Run quickly! Through the blessings of the Cross, I have captured the 'Arab commander."

He had hardly finished his words when the Sahâbah ؓ who were hiding behind the hill emerged with drawn swords, swooping out like eagles flinging off their (own) armour and the (Roman) clothing they were wearing, trying to reach them quickly. Right in front was the champion of Islâm, Dirâr ؓ, roaring like a lion. He was naked except for his loincloth and sword in hand .

Warden saw them coming, thinking them to be his men until he saw Dirâr ؓ leaping like a wolf towards him and waving his sword. He started shaking and his arm became paralysed with fear. He said to Khâlid ؓ, "I beg you in the name of your God to kill me yourself. Do not let this devil whose appearance I hate kill me."

Khâlid ؓ : Here is your killer.

Dirâr ؓ arrived roaring like a lion, waving his sword and reciting this poem:

I will very soon unite Warden with his boy
The worshippers of idols will I destroy.
To please my Master this act I will do
And have my sin forgiven through its virtue.

He approached him and said, "O enemy of Allâh! What has happened to your scheme against the Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ?" He then pointed the sword at him, but Khâlid ؓ said, "O Dirâr, wait a little. Do not hasten until I order you to."

By this time, the other Sahâbah ؓ arrived, each waving his sword and wanting to kill him, but Khâlid ؓ ordered, "Stay in your places. Leave him until I order otherwise."

Seeing this terrifying spectacle, Warden was so overwhelmed that he fell down begging for mercy by indicating with his finger.

Khâlid ؓ : Safety is only given to such a person who is deserving, whereas you are such a person who violated the truce and harboured treachery in your heart but:

وَٱللَّهُ خَيْرُ ٱلْمَـٰكِرِينَ

Allâh is the best of planners. [3:54]

Hearing these words, Dirâr ﷺ felt that he had been given enough respite and hacked at his shoulder and removing his crown said, "He who hastens for something is most entitled to it."

They then hacked him to pieces, reddening their swords and included his robes in the booty.

Khâlid ﷺ : I fear that since the Romans are awaiting their leader they might come and attack you suddenly. It is therefore better that he be beheaded right away. Then dress in the Roman's gear and head towards the enemy. When you near them, shout, "Allâhu Akbar!" When the Muslims hear, they will come and attack.

They went towards the enemy with Khâlid ﷺ and Dirâr ﷺ in front. Khâlid ﷺ was carrying Warden's head on the end of his sword. When they turned and became visible after being covered by the hill, the Romans thought that they were Romans who were carrying Khâlid's ﷺ head. They began cheering, clapping and displaying crosses out of joy and filling the skies with their noise.

This scene confused the Muslims into thinking that disaster had befallen Khâlid ﷺ. Some started making du'â, some became terrified, some started weeping and others started screaming. When Khâlid ﷺ approached the enemy ranks, he held Warden's head aloft and shouted, "O enemies of Allâh, this is your general's head and I am Khâlid bin al-Walîd, a Companion of the Messenger of Allâh!"

He then flung the head and shouting "Allâhu Akbar!", attacked them. Then Dirâr ﷺ and the others followed, also reciting "Allâhu Akbar!"

When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ saw this he ordered the troops, "O defenders of the Dîn, attack!"

He charged, followed by the entire army. When the Romans saw what had happened to their leader, they started fleeing, but the Muslims surrounded them and killed them. There was no rock, no stone, nothing which could hide them; wherever they went they tasted iron. From midday, the swords found no rest. The Romans scattered like mad camels.

'Âmir bin at-Tufayl ad-Dawsî ﷺ narrates:

I was in the army of Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ mounted on a horse of Damascus. We pursued the Christians until we reached a rough road where we saw a dust-cloud rising from a distance. We thought that it was reinforcements sent by Heraclius so we went on

alert, but when they came near we discovered them to be an army sent by Abû Bakr ﷺ to help us. Since the Romans were fleeing in the same direction as the Muslim army was coming from, they were killed and their wealth included in the booty.

Ath-Thaqafî narrates that Yûnus bin 'Abdil A'lâ narrated in al-Masjid al-Harâm:

The army which came to reinforce the Muslims at Ajnâdayn when the Christians were defeated was under the command of 'Amr bin al-'Âs bin Wâil as-Sahmî. They did not arrive until the day Rome was defeated.

It is narrated that more than 50,000 of the 90,000 Romans at Ajnâdayn were killed - any smaller amount is impossible. In the confusion of the battle, some of them killed each other while the scattered survivors fled to Caesarea and Damascus. The Muslims gained more booty than they had ever got in any previous battle. The silver and gold crosses alone were uncountable. Khâlid ﷺ gathered all the booty including Warden's crown and said, "I am not giving you a grain's worth now, but will distribute it after the conquest of Damascus if Allâh wills."

The battle of Ajnâdayn took place on Saturday 6 Jumâdâ al-Ûlâ 13 Hijrî, 23 days before Abû Bakr's ﷺ demise.

(Abû Bakr ﷺ reads Khâlid's ﷺ letter one month later, so either a wrong date is given or 23 days is wrong - translator's note)

41) Khâlid's ﷺ letter to Abû Bakr ﷺ

After the aforementioned events, Khâlid ﷺ wrote the following letter to Abû Bakr ﷺ to inform him of the victory:

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

From : Khâlid bin al-Walîd

To : The Khalîfah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ

As-Salamu 'Alaykum

I praise Allâh besides whom there is no other deity and send salutations on Rasûlullâh.

I praise and thank Allâh that the Muslims are well and the Disbelievers destroyed. The sparks of their fire have been cooled and they have been utterly defeated. I confronted the Roman forces at the Field of Ajnâdayn where Warden, the governor of Hims, was. Despite them making great preparations; coming out with great pomp and splendour; raising their crosses; and taking oaths upon their religion that they would never flee under any condition, we attacked them relying on Allâh. Allâh knew what was in our hearts and granted us patience, help and victory. Defeat encircled them and we slew them in every place, in every ditch, in every field. When we counted their dead we found 50,000. From the Muslims, 575 were martyred of which 20-25 were Ansâr and Himyarîs, 30 from Makkah and the rest from other peoples. I make du'â that Allâh includes them all in the ranks of the martyrs.

I have written this letter on Thursday 2 Jumâdâ al-Ûkhrâ. We are now heading for Damascus so make du'â that Allâh grants us victory. Convey my salâm to all the Muslims. Was-salâmu 'alayka.

He gave the letter to 'Abdurahmân bin Humayd saying, "Take it to al-Madînah," while he himself headed for Damascus.

Abû Bakr ﷺ would leave al-Madînah daily after Salâtul Fajr for news on Syria. One day as he was leaving al-Madînah as was his habit, Ibn Humayd was seen coming. The Sahâbah ﷺ hurriedly asked, "From where are you coming?"

Ibn Humayd : From Syria - Allâh has granted the Muslims victory.

Abû Bakr ﷺ immediately fell into prostration out of thanks. Ibn Humayd went to him and said, "O Khalifah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, lift your head for Allâh has comforted you by granting the Muslims victory."

He lifted his head and softly went through the letter and then after absorbing it, read it out to the others. This news spread like lightning throughout al-Madînah. The people eagerly ran to hear it, so he read out the letter before everyone once again.

When the people of Makkah, H̲ijâz and Yaman heard of the Muslim victories and booty gained from the Romans, they too yearned to go to Syria to earn (religious) reward. Thus the inhabitants, chiefs and prominent men of Makkah went to al-Madînah under the leadership of Abû Sufyân S̲akhr bin H̲arb ﷺ and Ghaydâq bin Hishâm to seek permission from Abû Bakr ﷺ to go to Syria. 'Umar ﷺ did not consider this appropriate and said to Abû Bakr ﷺ, "Actually these people bear hatred for the Muslims in their hearts, so do not give them permission. Allâh's Word is most high and theirs is most low. They are still on their Disbelief and wish to extinguish Allâh's Light but He will complete and perfect it even if they dislike it. Our claim and declaration is that besides Allâh there is no deity but these people oppose it. When Allâh honoured our Dîn and helped implement our Laws, they became Muslims out of fear of the sword. Now that they have heard that Allâh's army has gained victory over the Romans, they have come to us to send them to the enemy so that they can equal the First Muslims, that is the Muhâjirîn and Ans̲âr. I feel that you should definitely not permit them to go there.

Abû Bakr ﷺ : I will not oppose you.

When the people of Makkah heard of this, they gathered and went to Abû Bakr ﷺ who was with a group of Muslims in al-Masjid an-Nabawî. 'Umar ﷺ was on his left and 'Alî ﷺ on his right while the Syrian conquests were being discussed. The Quraysh made salâm, sat in front of him and consulted each other as to who should speak first. Eventually, Abû Sufyân ﷺ said to 'Umar ﷺ, "O 'Umar, it is true that in the Pre-Islâmic period there existed enmity between us, but since Allâh guided us, we have cleaned our hearts with regard to you because Faith wipes out Polytheism. You on the other hand still look to the past. Why do you still keep old grudges and renewed enmity which will not be wiped away? Can we hope that you will wipe away your ill feeling towards us? We know that your rank is higher than ours and that you overtake us in Faith and Jihâd. We acknowledge your status and do not deny it."

'Umar ﷺ felt ashamed and kept quiet. He started perspiring on his forehead out of embarrassment and then said, "By Allâh! I did not mean what you understand. I only wished to avoid violence and evil. You people still have within you the good manly qualities of Pre-Islâmic times. You still maintain your greatness through lineage and tribe."

Abû Sufyân ﷺ : I make the Khalîfah and yourself witness that I dedicate myself to the Path of Allâh.

All the chiefs of Makkah made similar statements until 'Umar ﷺ became pleased and Abû Bakr ﷺ made the following du'â, "O Allâh, grant them better than what they

hope for and desire. Grant them a good reward for what they do. Grant them victory over their enemies and do not make their enemies victorious. Indeed You have power over everything."

After a few days, a Yamanî army arrived under the command of 'Amr bin Ma'dîkarab ﷺ also intending to go to Syria. While they were encamped Mâlik bin al-Ashtar an-Nakha'î ﷺ arrived with the same intention. He and his family lodged by 'Alî ﷺ. Mâlik ﷺ loved him very much and had participated with him in several expeditions during the time of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. Thus these people together with the Jurhum tribe formed an army of close to 9,000.

42) Abû Bakr's ﷺ letter to Khâlid ﷺ.

When the army was prepared, Abû Bakr ﷺ wrote the following letter:

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

From : Abû Bakr as-Siddiq, the Khalîfah of Rasûlullâh

To : Khâlid bin al-Walîd and the other Muslims (with him).

I praise that Pure Being besides Whom there is no other deity and send salutations on His Messenger, Muhammad. I command you to fear Allâh in all conditions – in open and in secret, to be soft with the Muslims, to take only such work from them which they have strength to do, to overlook their faults and to consult them in every matter. I am overjoyed to hear of the conquests Allâh has granted you, the help He has granted and the defeat He has inflicted upon the enemy. Advance upon your horses, conquering the lands of the Disbelievers until you reach the Gardens of Syria (Damascus) and Allâh grants you its conquest. Thereafter advance against Hims and Ma'rât then Antioch.

Salâm and Allâh's mercy and blessings be on you and all your companions. I am sending to you the warriors of Yaman, the lions of Nakha' and the chiefs of Makkah. 'Amr bin Ma'dîkarab

and Mâlik bin al-Ashtar will be of special assistance unto you. When you reach the great mountainous city of Antioch and find Heraclius Caesar there make peace with him if he offers peace and fight him if he wants to fight. Do not cross the mountains until you have written to me. I believe that Heraclius's death is soon.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ ٱلْمَوْتِ

Every soul shall taste death. [3:185]

Was-salâm.

Abû Bakr ﷺ then put the letter in an envelope and stamped it with Rasûlullâh's ﷺ seal. He then gave it to Ibn Humayd, saying, "You were the messenger from Syria, so you take the answer to Syria."

He took the letter and quickly reached Syria on his camel.

43) Return to Damascus

Nâfi' bin 'Umayrah narrates:

Khâlid ﷺ started heading for Damascus as soon as he had sent his letter to Abû Bakr ﷺ. When the Damascenes heard of the slaughter of the warriors, they shut the fort out of terror. Villagers and townspeople abandoned their districts and took refuge in Damascus. The fort was prepared and swords, shields, spears and catapults put on the city walls, and flags and crosses implanted.

By the time Khâlid ﷺ arrived, Damascus was fully fortified. In his army was 'Amr bin al-Âs and Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ with 2,000 men each (in another copy 9,000) followed by Shurahbîl bin Hasanah ﷺ and 'Âmir bin Rabî'âh ﷺ bringing 1,000 each and then Mu'âth bin Jabal ﷺ brought along another 2,000. When the Damascenes saw the Muslims coming like the waves of the sea, they felt their defeat to be imminent.

Khâlid ﷺ encamped at the Monastery, half a mile from Damascus and then summoning his generals, said to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "You know how these Christians betrayed and attacked us when we left. Therefore you should encamp at al-Jâbiyah Gate with your troops and not give them any respite or treaty of safety lest they again do some treachery. Do not abandon your position under any circumstances. Remain close to the Gate and constantly send small parties on a rotation basis against them so that they have no respite. The long stay here and the closure of the fort should not dishearten you, there is no need to hurry. Be patient, victory is always achieved through patience. However, never abandon your position and save yourself from their treachery."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Very well, if Allâh wills it will be so.

So saying, he took a quarter of the army and encamped at al-Jâbiyah Gate where, a short distance from the gate, a Tâifî tent of camel's hair was pitched for him.

Maslamah bin 'Awf narrates from Sâlim bin 'Abdillâh from Hajjâj al-Ansârî:

I asked my grandfather, Rifâ'ah bin 'Âsim ﷺ, who was with Abû 'Ubaydah's army at Damascus, "Abû 'Ubaydah had a lot of booty captured from Ajnâdayn, Busrâ, Shakhûrâ and Hawrân from which there must have been thousands of tents. So why was that same camel-hair Tâifî tent pitched for him which he first had?"

He replied, "O my son, that was due to his simplicity and humility so that he would not become involved in worldly beauty and love for it. Also, he wished to show the Romans that the Muslims were not coming out of love for the world and love of territorial expansion, but for Allâh's pleasure, desire for the Hereafter and to establish Allâh's Dîn."

"O my son, the condition of the Muslims at that time was such that when they camped at any Roman city they would pitch their own old tents separately and pitch the (captured Roman) tents some distance away. Therein they would only keep horses, weapons, armour, daggers and shields and no-one would go near to them. If someone got caught in the rain, he would rather get soaked than take refuge in such a tent wherein Allâh's name alone was not taken. Our attitude to their weapons was such that we would rather wear stringed-up date-pits instead of wearing their armour."

44) The second siege of Damascus

When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ reached al-Jâbiyah Gate, he ordered an assault. Thereafter Khâlid ﷺ called Yazîd bin Abî Sufyan ﷺ and said to him, "Attack the Small Gate with your men, but be protective over their lives. So if anyone comes out against you and you find yourselves weak, then inform me and I will immediately come to your aid."

He then called Shurahbîl bin Hasanah ﷺ and said to him, "Target the gate which the governor, Thomas, is supervising, but be careful because I have heard that he is very cunning and daring. Heraclius greatly loves him due to his bravery and, in fact, gave him his daughter in marriage. If he attacks, then inform me so that I can help you if Allâh wills."

Shurahbîl ﷺ : There is none amongst my troops whom he can dupe.

Khâlid ﷺ called 'Amr bin al-'Âs ﷺ next and ordered him, "Camp at Farâdîs Gate and make no movement from there because I have heard that they have gathered there."

'Amr ﷺ went there and then Qays bin Hubayrah was called and told, "Go to Fajr (in other copies 'Kaysân') Gate." He too went as instructed.

The Eastern Gate remained shut without any fighting taking place there, so the 'Arabs called it the 'Peace Gate'.

After making the above preparations, Khâlid ﷺ took the remaining troops and camped at the Eastern Gate. He called Dirâr ﷺ and gave him 2,000 men and said, "Patrol all sides of the city. If any difficulty arises or a Roman spy is seen, inform me immediately so that I can take appropriate action."

Dirâr ﷺ : It pains my heart to leave battle and remain in waiting.

Khâlid ﷺ : Alright. You may engage in battle for as long as possible.

Dirâr ﷺ : If that is the case, then I leave in Allâh's name.

He then left while reciting the following poem until he reached his destination like an angry lion:

O Damascus, a Dirâr has come who will do you great damage,
With my sword I will turn your necks into wreckage.

It is sharp and glittering, I will set you all aright,
And drive you away through Allâh's Word's might.

(Dirâr literally means great harmer - translator's note).

Khâlid ﷺ remained at the Eastern Gate. When his men launched an attack, the Romans vowed, "We will fight to the last man and will not let our women and children fall into their hands," and started firing arrows. Both sides fired arrows and stones from catapults to such an extent that most of the men on both sides were wounded.

'Abdurahmân bin Humayd arrived with Abû Bakr's ﷺ letter when Khâlid ﷺ and Râfi' bin 'Umayrah were engaged in combat at the Eastern Gate. He headed towards the Eastern Gate where he handed the letter to Khâlid ﷺ who was very pleased to read it and announced to the Muslims the coming of Abû Sufyân ﷺ, 'Amr bin Ma'dîkarab az-Zubaydî ﷺ and their army. The news spread throughout the army.

The Muslims fought the whole day. Then at night-fall the two parties separated, with every Muslim general maintaining his position at his appointed gate. Khâlid ﷺ had Abû Bakr's ﷺ letter read out at each gate causing the Muslims great joy to hear of the coming reinforcements. The night was spent in anticipation of the morning's battle while each division appointed men to guard their own camp. Dirâr ﷺ spent the whole night patrolling the whole army, in case the enemy should attack.

The Muslims passed the night raising their voices with the cry of, "Allâhu Akbar! Allâhu Akbar!" While the Romans too were calling out their special words and shouting. They hung flags from the city walls, rang bells and burnt such fires that turned the night into day.

45) The Damascenes go to Thomas

The Damascenes gathered by the city-chiefs and elders and said, "What should we do?" Some said, "It is better that we offer the Muslims whatever amount they want for peace." Others supported this and said, "Yes, at Ajnâdayn they were able to face armies that included patricians and the imperial family. Despite the Roman army being bigger, they ground them like grain. We do not have greater numbers here nor fighting skills, so how can we face them?" Still others opined that Heraclius's son-in-law, Thomas, should be asked for his opinion. Whether he decided on surrender or fighting, they would agree. They went and found armed soldiers at Thomas's gate, who asked them, "Why have you come?"

Damascenes : We wish to meet Caesar's son-in-law.

Soldiers : We will request permission inside.

Permission was granted. They entered and kissed the ground before Thomas and remained standing until he permitted them to sit. They were clearly afraid and depressed.

Thomas : You have come on such a dark night. Why?

Damascenes : O sir, pay some attention to the disaster which afflicts us these days and please find some remedy for it. We trust you and rely on you. Either we agree to whatever the 'Arabs demand, or you write to Caesar for reinforcements, or you yourself should defend us. Failing this, there is no averting our destruction.

Thomas (laughing) : Shame on you. You are the ones who had encouraged Damascus to defiance in the first place. I swear by Caesar's head that I do not even consider the Muslims worthy of fighting. They cannot withstand a shower of arrows. If they come close to me then I will make their (dead) ancestors meet them and fully avenge my people. Be at ease in your city for even if the gates are opened for them, they will not have the guts to enter.

Damascenes : O sir, the Muslims are very fierce and there is more to them than you have described. Their smallest and oldest man is capable of taking on ten to 100 men. Their leader is so fierce that he cannot be confronted. If you wish to keep us and our wealth safe, then either make peace or come with us to fight them.

Thomas : My people, firstly, you are more than them; secondly, your city is well fortified and the fort is closed; thirdly, besides this city you have other cities; and fourthly, you have enough weapons, armour and equipment. On the other hand, these people are naked and bare-footed. Where do they have so much equipment?

Damascenes : O sir, they have our equipment and numerous weapons which they captured in Palestine and Buṣrâ and which they took from us at Bayt Luhyâ when we fought them with Calius and Uriel. Then they looted Paulus and his brother at Shakhûrâ. That is besides what they have gained at Ajnâdayn. Yes, they have taken much wealth and equipment from us but are not concerned about using it. This is because their Prophet has said that whoever of them is killed goes to Paradise forever and whichever non-Muslim is killed is flung into Hell, so they fearlessly charge, bare-chested and bare-footed so as to achieve Paradise according to what he said.

Thomas (laughing) : Your simple-mindedness makes them more daring. These ideas have set in your minds, so now these subservient slave people have aimed at you. If you only fight them with a true heart then you will massacre them.

Damascenes : O sir, remove this affliction in whatever way you choose, but remember that if you do not help us then we will open the gates for them to achieve peace.

Thomas pondered for some time and concluded that they might act upon their word, so he said, "Do not worry. Tomorrow we will go out together to fight them. We will pick out their chiefs and kill them and we will kill and drive the enemy away. However, in such a heavy battle you will have to fight and be my right hand. If you are willing to sacrifice your lives then you will be successful.

Damascenes : We will be with you, in fact we shall be ahead of you. We will keep fighting for as long as one of us remains alive.

Thomas : Very good. Utter disaster will befall the 'Arabs.

They thanked him and left, guarding the fort the whole night. They lit fires at the towers and gates, awaiting Thomas's orders.

On the other side, the Sahâbah ﷺ were turning towards Allâh, reciting "Allâhu Akbar!" and "Lâ ilâha illallâh!" and sending salutations on Rasûlullâh ﷺ. Khâlid ﷺ had left the women and children with the booty at the Monastery while Râfi' bin 'Umayrah stood guard the whole night with the vanguard at the Eastern Gate.

At dawn, each general led his men in Salâtul Fajr and after leading his men in Salâtul Fajr, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ gave orders for an assault. "Do not lose heart in the battle!" Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ advised his men, "Whoever makes an effort today will be at ease tomorrow. Be cautious in your archery for arrows miss and hit. Do not sit on your horses, for the enemies of Allâh are in a high place, thus making you easy targets. Keep helping each other and remain steadfast against the enemy." They therefore advanced on foot, covering themselves with shields, while Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ advanced on the Small Gate, Qays bin Hubayrah on the Kaysân Gate, Râfi' bin 'Umayrah on the Eastern Gate, Shurahbîl ﷺ on the Thomas Gate and 'Amr bin al-'Âs as-Sahmî ﷺ on the Farâdîs Gate.

Rifâ'ah bin Qays narrates:

I asked my father, Qays, who was present at the conquest of Damascus, "Did the Muslims attack on foot or on horseback on the day you conquered Damascus?"

He replied, "Besides Dirâr's 2,000 horsemen who were patrolling the city borders to avoid sudden enemy attacks, all the Muslims went on foot. Whenever he reached a gate he would stop and say, "Be patient, be patient against Allâh's enemies. Tomorrow on the Day of Judgement, you will be resurrected in the shade of Allâh's mercy. If they come out of the city walls then Allâh is quite capable of punishing them from above or below. If Allâh wills, you will conquer."

Rifâ'ah continues: The two sides engaged each other, the archers fired and the Romans fired a shower of arrows and catapulted rocks from the fort but the Muslims remained firm. Thomas then came out of the gate bearing his name. He was renowned in Damascus as a great worshipper, ascetic, warrior and sage. No greater worshipper or ascetic could be found in the cities of the Christians, nor did they consider anyone more pious than him. Now he came in a great state, carrying a huge cross which he implanted at the tower. All the patricians and important Christians surrounded him. Someone else was carrying a Bible, which was also placed by the cross. The Christians started shouting, of which some words could be perceived. Thomas put his hand on a verse of the Bible and said, "O God, help him who is on the truth. Grant us victory and deliver us not unto the enemy. Destroy the wrong-doers, You know them well. O God, we seek your help in the name of the Cross and through the intercession of Him who was crucified, displayed divine signs and miracles, sought Your closeness, is always with You, came to this world and then returned and brought us the Gospel from You. Grant victory to the guided ones."

All the Christians said, "Amen."

Rifâ'ah says: Shurahbîl bin Hasanah narrated that to me. At that time he and Romanus, the governor of Busrâ, were at the Thomas Gate. Romanus listened and translated into 'Arabic. These words of Disbelief and accusation against 'Îsâ bin Maryam ﷺ enraged Shurahbîl ؓ and the Muslims so they asked Allâh's protection (from such evil words) and advanced to attack. Shurahbîl ؓ shouted, "O accursed one, you have lied! 'Îsâ ﷺ is just like Âdam ﷺ according to Allâh. He created him from earth, kept him alive and then took him."

He then attacked.

46) The attack on Damascus

The Muslims fought more fiercely than they had ever done before and the accursed Thomas also fought fiercely with his men starting a shower of arrows and stones. Many Muslims were thus wounded, including Abân bin Sa'îd bin al-'Âs ﷺ who was struck with a poisoned arrow. He extracted the arrow and bound the wound with his turban, but the poison had already penetrated his body and he fell face down. His comrades picked him up and took him to the army. They wanted to remove his turban to treat him, but he forbade them saying, "If you remove it, then my life will end instantly. By Allâh! I have received that which I have been asking Allâh for and hoping for." They disobeyed him and untied it. They had not yet finished when he looked towards the sky, pointed his finger and said, *"I testify that there is no deity but Allâh and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh. This is what the Most Gracious promised and the Messengers have been truthful,"* and instantly his soul departed. May Allâh have mercy on him.

He had just married his cousin, Umm Abân bint 'Utbah bin Rabî'ah, at Ajnâdayn. Her hands and head still had traces of myrtle and perfume of the wedding night. She was from a greatly daring family and would herself fight on foot. When she heard of her husband's martyrdom, she came stumbling anxious and confused and stood at his body. She remained patient in expectation of reward and said nothing besides, "Be blessed in what you have received. You have gone to the mercy of the Rabb of all the worlds and to the wide-eyed virgin damsels of Paradise. You have gone to that Rabb of all the worlds who united us and then separated us. By Allâh! Because I long for you, I will engage in Jihâd to such an extent that I will be united with you. This is because neither have I seen you properly and taken comfort in you, and neither have you. Allâh decided that my desire should not be fulfilled. I have made it forbidden upon myself that any man after you should touch me and I dedicate myself to the Path of Allâh. I am hoping that we shall meet soon."

It is said that no women was found who was more patient than her. The burial preparations were made with Khâlid ﷺ leading the Salâtul Janâzah and then he was buried. His grave is visited up to this day. Umm Abân did not wait at all at the grave, but armed herself with his weapons and joined the army without informing Khâlid ﷺ. She asked the men, "At which gate was my husband martyred?"

They replied, "At the Thomas Gate which is named after Heraclius's son-in-law. In fact, Thomas killed your husband."

So she went to Shurahbîl's ﷺ army and fought fiercely. She was very good at archery.

Shurahbîl ﵁ narrates:

I was that day at the Thomas Gate and saw someone in front of Thomas who was carrying a cross and gesturing to his army. He was shouting, "O God, help the Cross and help him who seeks the Cross's protection. O God, manifest his victory and increase his prestige."

I was still looking at him when Umm Abân fired an arrow which hit its target. He dropped the cross with its glittering jewels. Every Muslim rushed to pick it up and we were showered with stones. Yet the Muslims still rushed ahead, falling over each other to be the first to get it. When Allâh's enemy, Thomas, saw the Muslims rushing in droves at the cross, he felt humiliated and sensed his destruction. He thought to himself that Heraclius would certainly discover that he had let the 'Arabs get the cross, so he tightened his belt, took his sword and shield and said to his men, "Whoever wants to come with me, come, and whoever wants to stay, stay. I am going to fight them and drive them off, thus giving my heart peace."

He then ordered his men to open the gate and rushed forth. When his men saw this and realised his bravery, they all followed him and swarmed out like locusts. The Muslims were surrounding the cross, but when they saw the Romans charging they handed it over to Shurahbîl ﵁ and split up to take on the enemy in single combat. From above the gate and from every direction they were struck with stones and arrows, so Shurahbîl ﵁ called out, "O Muslims, fall back to save yourselves from the arrows coming from Allâh's enemies."

They fell back until they were safe from the arrows. Thomas came rushing after them striking left and right, bellowing like a camel with his warriors all around him. Shurahbîl ﵁ called out, "O people, give up your lives to seek Paradise. Please your Creator through your actions for He is not pleased with fleeing. Do not flee, but attack them and go towards them. May Allâh bless you."

The Muslims launched a vicious attack in which the two parties ended up mixed amongst each other, striking with their swords and firing arrows. When the Damascenes heard that Thomas had gone out of his gate and that the Great Cross had fallen from the bearer's hands, they were absolutely terrified. Thomas began searching for it until he found it with Shurahbîl ﵁. He could not control himself and attacked saying, "Hand over the Cross! O motherless one, you have met great misfortune."

Shurahbîl ﷺ flung the cross and confronted Thomas. When he saw the cross lying on the ground, he and his companions shrieked terrifyingly. When Abân's ﷺ widow saw Allâh's enemy, Thomas, attacking Shurahbîl ﷺ she asked, "Who is that?"

Someone said, "He is Caesar's son-in-law, your husband's killer."

When she heard that, she attacked fiercely until she got near enough to Thomas to shoot an arrow at him. The Romans threatened her, but she never turned to them until she had him in her target saying, "In name of Allâh and through the blessings of Rasûlullâh ﷺ."

Thomas was reaching out to Shurahbîl ﷺ when her arrow struck him square in the right eye and stuck there. He fled screaming, while she tried to get another shot at him. The Romans tried to avoid their misfortune and rushed to her, so a group of Muslims ran to defend her. When she was safe, she started firing again, hitting a Christian in the chest who fell to the ground.

The first to flee that day was Thomas, shrieking all the way to the gate due to the intense pain caused by the arrow. Shurahbîl ﷺ called out, "Be destroyed! Catch the Roman dog. Attack the dogs to catch the enemy of Allâh."

So they attacked until they drove the Romans back to the gate where the people defended them with arrows and stones. The Muslims returned to their camp after having killed great numbers of the enemy and seizing their booty, wealth and cross.

Thomas entered the city and shut the gates. The doctors came to extract the arrow from his eye but were unsuccessful, so they sawed it off, leaving the point in his eye. They asked to take him to his house, but he refused and sat at the gate entrance until the pain subsided. They said, "Go home for the remainder of the night, for today we have suffered two tragedies - the tragedy of the Cross and the tragedy of your eye. All this has been caused by the archer. That nation is invincible, so we ask you to surrender."

Thomas became angry and said, "Be destroyed! Should I forget about the Great Cross being taken and my eye being lost? When this news reaches Caesar, he will accuse me of weakness and helplessness. No, they will be pursued under all circumstances. I will recover my Cross and avenge my eyes with 1,000 of their eyes and take back all that they have looted. Then I will go to their master in al-Hijâz, wipe out his traces, destroy their houses, level the habitations and turn their cities into abodes of wild animals."

The accursed one went to the top of the wall with his eye bandaged and encouraged the people, "Do not be afraid and do not fear that which has appeared to you from the 'Arabs. I guarantee that the Cross will strike them down."

So they became firm and launched a violent assault until Shurahbîl ﷺ sent a message to Khâlid ﷺ to inform him of the situation. The messenger said, "Thomas, the enemy of Allâh, has launched a massive attack against us, so we request reinforcements because the battle is fiercer here than at the other gate."

Khâlid ﷺ : All praise belongs to Allâh! But how did you manage to capture the cross from the Romans?

Messenger : A man was carrying it in front of Thomas when Abân's widow shot him with an arrow. It fell towards us so Allâh's enemy came out, but Abân's widow shot him in the right eye.

Khâlid ﷺ : Thomas is greatly respected by Caesar and is the one that is preventing them from surrendering. May Allâh suffice us from his evil. Return to Shurahbîl and tell him, "Guard that which I have ordered you to, for every division is engaged in its own problems and cannot come to you. However, remember that I am nearby and that Dirâr is patrolling the city and is therefore also there for you."

The messenger returned and informed Shurahbîl ﷺ who remained patient and fought on for the rest of the day.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ rejoiced when he heard of what had occured between Shurahbîl ﷺ and Thomas and his capture of the cross.

47) The night attack

In the morning, Thomas summoned the city elders and warriors. When they arrived, he said, "O Christians, a greatly untrustworthy nation has descended upon you. They have arrived and now inhabit your lands. So how can you be so patient when your women are dishonoured and your children imprisoned? Your women are now their slave-girls and your children their slaves. The Cross did not fall except out of anger at your desire for peace with the 'Arabs and so it had no relationship left with you. I went out against them and would not have returned until I had completely finished them off, but was struck in my eye. I will definitely take revenge and pluck out 1,000 'Arab eyes. I will get to the Cross and soon reclaim it from them."

Damascenes : Here we are present before you and are pleased with whatever you are pleased with for yourself. If you order us to go out, we will go and if you order us to fight, we will fight.

Thomas : Know that he who bravely tackles war does not fear anything. I have resolved to attack tonight and catch them in their places for the night terrifies and you are better acquainted with the terrain than they are. All of you must prepare for battle tonight and go out of the gate. I shall not return until I have completed these tasks. When I have finished them off, I will take their commander as a prisoner to Caesar so that he may do with him as he pleases.

Damascenes : Out of love and honour (we obey).

Then when they split up into groups at each gate, Thomas said, "Do not fear, for their leader is far from you. There are none here except their lower-classes and freed-slaves, so grind them like you grind wheat."

He called one group to go out from Farâdîs Gate against 'Amr bin al-'Âs ﷺ while he departed from the Thomas Gate with every great warrior. Hanging a gong on the wall he said, "The sounding of the gong will be the signal for you to rush out of the Gates and slay the sleeping enemy. If you do this, you will break them so that they will never heal again."

They rejoiced and went to their stations, awaiting the signal to attack the Muslims. Thomas called a Roman and said to him, "Take a gong and climb up the wall with it. When you see us opening the gate, sound it lightly so that only our people can hear it." He then led with his group, all armoured and carrying swords. He carried an Indian blade and wore a Persian helmet which Heraclius had gifted to him. The Romans kept their swords still until they reached the gate where Thomas waited for their numbers to be completed. When he saw them completed he said, "O people! When we open the gate, rush out at full speed towards the enemy. Attack them and place your swords in them. Do not spare anyone who begs for mercy, except the commander. If anyone sees the Cross he should grab it."

They responded, "For love and honour!"

Thomas ordered someone to go to the man with the gong and order him to strike it lightly. He opened the gate and they rushed out against the unaware Sahâbah ﷺ. However, some of the Sahâbah ﷺ were awake. Upon hearing the noise they woke up the others. The Muslims sprang up like striking pythons so that they were alert when the enemy arrived. They attacked the disorganised enemy with their swords under

cover of darkness until Khâlid ﷺ heard. He stood up anxious about the yelling and shouted, "Come forth to the aid of Islâm! By the Lord of the Ka'bah, my people have been tricked – O Allâh, keep watch over them with the Eye which never sleeps. O Most Merciful of those who show mercy."

Khâlid ﷺ went forth without armour or headgear, wearing only a linen Syrian robe. He and 400 horsemen rode like angry lions until they reach the Eastern Gate where they found the group fighting Râfi' bin 'Umayrah and his men. The Muslim voices were raised with, "Lâ ilâha illallâhu!" and "Allâhu Akbar!" while the enemy had been looking down from the walls and screaming since the Muslims awoke. Khâlid ﷺ attacked the Romans proclaiming, "Glad tidings, O Muslims. Help has come from the Rabb of all the worlds. I am the valiant horseman. I am Khâlid bin al-Walîd." He attacked them, throwing their warriors to the ground and killing their men, all the while worrying about Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and the Muslims at the other gates whose screams could be heard. The Romans, Jews and Christians were all screaming.

Sinân bin 'Awf narrates: I asked my cousin, Qays, "Were the Jews also fighting you?" He narrated:

Yes, they were shooting arrows at us from above the walls. At that time Khâlid ﷺ feared what the enemy of Allâh was doing to Shurahbîl ﷺ who was in dire straits with none other facing equal difficulty. The first to reach the Muslims was Thomas. They patiently fought him as he shouted, "Where is your despicable general who afflicted me? I am the defender of the Cross."

He wounded several Muslims. When Shurahbîl ﷺ heard him he turned to him and said, "I am your man, I am your rival, I am the exterminator of you all, the seizer of your cross and the scribe of the revelation of Rasûlullâh ﷺ."

Thomas sprang to him like a lion but found Shurahbîl ﷺ to be a fierce opponent and thus the two rivals remained fighting until half the night had passed.

Abân's ﷺ widow was in Shurahbîl's ﷺ army and displayed the greatest patience while shooting her arrow. Her every arrow found its target until she killed many Romans. They began avoiding her until one Roman appeared, whom she shot in the throat. He screamed to his comrades who gathered against her and took her prisoner, while the enemy of Allâh died. Shurahbîl ﷺ struck Thomas with a terrific blow which he blocked with his leather shield, shattering the sword. Thomas intended taking him prisoner when two Roman horsemen grabbed him with the Muslim cavalry coming behind them. When these Muslims attacked the Romans, Umm Abân

broke free. She attacked them and called out. 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr ﷺ and Abân bin 'Uthman bin 'Affân led the Muslims to her and killed the two Roman horsemen. Thomas returned to Damascus unsuccessful.

Tamîm bin 'Adî who witnessed the conquest of Syria narrates:

I was in the tent of Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who was performing Salâh when he heard a scream. He said, "There is no power to do good and no ability to avoid evil except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty." He put on his armour and called his men to prepare them. He saw the Muslims in an uproar and fighting, so he overtook both the (Roman) right-wing and left-wing advancing on the gate shouting, "Allâhu Akbar!" The Muslims also began shouting, "Allâhu Akbar!" When the Christians heard, they thought that the Muslims were attacking from behind so they retreated while Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ mowed them down.

I (al-Wâqidî) have been informed that not a single Roman survived Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ attack that night. During the fight, Dirâr ﷺ arrived soaked in blood. Khâlid ﷺ said, "What has happened behind you?"

Dirâr ﷺ : Glad tidings, O commander, I did not come to you until I slaughtered 150 men this night and my men killed such a number which cannot be counted. I have sufficed you against the threat coming from the Small Gate against Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân. Then I went to the other gates and killed many men.

Khâlid ﷺ was pleased with that. They then all went to Shurahbîl ﷺ and thanked him for what he had achieved. On that moonlit night, such events happened the like of which had not been seen before and thousands of Romans were slain.

48) The surrender

The city elders went to Thomas and said, "Sir, we advised you, but you did not heed us. Most of us have been killed and they have such a leader, Khâlid bin al-Walîd, who cannot be overcome but he is more pliant towards peace than you. So if you do not agree, we will make peace ourselves and you can do as you please. Thomas pleaded, "O my people, give me a chance until I write to Caesar to inform him of what has befallen us." He immediately wrote the following letter:

To : Merciful Caesar

From : Your son-in-law, Thomas

The 'Arabs have come upon us like the white of an eye surrounding the pupil. They massacred the Ajnâdayn army and then returned to us and killed many of us. I went out against them but lost my eye, so now I have resolved to surrender and render Jizyah to the 'Arabs. You should either come here yourself or send reinforcements or order us to make peace with them, for indeed our difficulties have intensified.

He then folded it, sealed it and sent it off.

In the morning the Muslims began preparing for battle. Khâlid ﷺ sent a message to each general ordering him to attack from his position. So Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ mounted his horse and launched an attack. Matters became so bad for Damascus that the people begged Khâlid ﷺ for respite. He refused and insisted on battle. The situation continued like this until the siege began severely pressing the Damascenes who were waiting for Caesar's order. They gathered and said to each other, "We cannot bear this any longer. If we go out to fight the 'Arabs they will overcome us and if we leave them the siege will just worsen. Therefore, let us agree to peace on their terms."

An old man who had read the ancient scriptures said, "O my people, I swear by God that even if Caesar comes with his whole army, he will not be able to defend you from them. I have read in the Book that Muhammad is the seal of the Prophets and that his religion will conquer every other religion. So it will be better if you submit and give them whatever they want." They inclined towards him because of his great learning and knowledge of predictions of the future wars and said, "What is your opinion, for that man at the Eastern Gate is a great bloodshedder."

Old man : If you wish this, then go to the man at al-Jâbiyah Gate where someone who knows 'Arabic should call out loudly, "O 'Arabs, safety!" until we go down to them and speak to their general.

Abû Hurayrah ﷺ narrates:

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had stationed men near the gates fearing a raid like that of the previous night. That night was the turn of Banû Daws under 'Âmir bin at-Tufayl ad-

Dawsî ‎ﷺ‎. While we were sitting near the gate we heard the Romans calling out, so I rushed to Abû 'Ubaydah ‎ﷺ‎ and told him. He was pleased and said, "Go and tell them that they have our guarantee of safety."

When I told them they asked, "Who are you?"

I said, "I am Abû Hurayrah, the Sahâbî of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, but even if a slave had to give you safety from us in the pre-Islamic period we would not betray you, so (think for yourselves) what our condition is now that Allâh has guided us to Islâm."

So they opened the gate and 100 of their priests and elders came out, going to Abû 'Ubaydah's ‎ﷺ‎ army. The Muslims went to them and took away their crosses. When they reached Abû 'Ubaydah's ‎ﷺ‎ tent, he welcomed them and after seating them said, "Our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has said, 'When the respected one of a nation comes to you, you should honour him.' "

They began speaking about peace and said, "We want you to leave our churches and not destroy them."

Amongst the churches of that time were the Cathedral of John the Baptist, which is today the al-Jâmi' al-Umawî; the Church of Mary; the Church of Hanna; the Church of the Night Market and the Church of Warning.

Abû 'Ubaydah ‎ﷺ‎ said, "None will be destroyed" and wrote out the treaty of surrender and guarantee of safety without signing it or having it witnessed because he was not the commander-in-chief. They took it and said, "Come with us to the city."

So he stood up and the following rode with him: Abû Hurayrah, Mu'âth bin Jabal, Nu'aym bin 'Amr, 'Abdullâh bin 'Amr ad-Dawsî, Thul Kalâ' al-Himyarî, Hassân bin Nu'mân, Jarîr bin Nawfal al-Himyarî, Sayf bin Salamah, Ma'mar bin Khalîfah, Rabî'ah bin Mâlik, al-Mughîrah bin Shu'bah, Abû Lubâbah bin al-Munthir, 'Awf bin Sâ'idah, 'Âmir bin Qays, 'Ubâdah bin 'Atîbah, Bishr bin 'Âmir and 'Abdullâh bin Qurt al-Asadî, totalling thirty-five senior Sahabah ‎ﷺ‎ as well as sixty-five ordinary people. When they approached the gate, Abû 'Ubaydah ‎ﷺ‎ said, "I need hostages until we enter with you," so they handed the hostages over.

It is said that Abû 'Ubaydah ‎ﷺ‎ had seen Rasûlullâh ﷺ in a dream. Rasûlullâh ﷺ told him, "If Allâh wills you will conquer the city tonight."

He said, "O Rasûlullâh, I see that you are in a hurry?"

Rasûlullâh ﷺ : I have to attend Abû Bakr's Salâtul Janâzah.

Then he awoke.

I (al-Wâqidî) have been informed that when Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ entered the city of Damascus through the al-Jâbiyah Gate with his companions, the monks and priests walked ahead of them, raising the Bible and burning incense of aloe-wood, ambergis, musk and frankincense. Khâlid ؓ did not know because he was launching an attack.

A Roman priest named Jonah, son of Murcius, lived a house attached to the city wall joining the Eastern Gate where Khâlid ؓ was. Jonah possessed the Prophecies of Daniel ؑ wherein it was written, "Allâh Most High will conquer the lands through the Sahâbah and their Dîn will triumph over every other religion."

That night he dug a hole from his house (to the outside of the city) and unknown to his family, went to the Muslim camp. He told Khâlid ؓ, "I have come out of my house and dug a hole (under the city wall). I want a guarantee of safety for myself, my family and children."

Khâlid ؓ agreed and sent with him 100 men, mostly Himyarîs, and said, "When you enter the city go to the gate, break the locks and remove the chains so that we can enter if Allâh wills." So they followed Jonah and entered his house via the hole where they put on their armour and made preparations. Then they emerged and went to the gate where they raised cries of "Allâhu Akbar!" When the Christians heard, they became alarmed. The Sahâbah ؓ broke the locks and cut the chains. Khâlid ؓ and the Muslims entered and began killing and capturing the Romans until they reached the Church of Mary.

49) Surrender and Conquest

Khâlid's ؓ army met Abû 'Ubaydah's ؓ army at the church. Abû 'Ubaydah's ؓ men were walking, with the monks walking in front of them. When Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ saw Khâlid's ؓ amazement at them having their swords sheathed, he said, "O Abû Sulaymân, Allâh has peacefully conquered the city through me. Allâh suffices the Muslims in battle. Peace has been made."

Khâlid ؓ : What peace? May Allâh never rectify their condition. How can they have a peace agreement when I have conquered them by the sword and the Muslims' swords drip with their blood and I have taken their children as slaves and seized their wealth?

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O commander, I entered through peaceful surrender.

Khâlid ﷺ : You were always so unaware. I entered with the sword through conquest and they had no defence left.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Fear Allâh, O commander. By Allâh! I have accepted their surrender and implemented it. I have given them a written agreement.

Khâlid ﷺ : You make peace with them without my instructions when I am your commander-in-chief? I will not remove my sword from them until I have finished off every last one of them.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ: By Allâh! I did not think that you would oppose me when I made the agreement. I held an opinion and Allâh is in control of my affairs. I have spared all their lives and guaranteed them the safety of Allâh and Rasûlullâh ﷺ. All the Muslims with me were satisfied with that and treachery does not become us.

The argument intensified with everyone looking on. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ saw that Khâlid ﷺ was not shifting and that those Sahâbah ﷺ who were with him were 'Arab bedouins, adamant on killing the Romans and seizing their wealth. He called out, "Alas, by Allâh! I gave them protection and it has been violated." He pointed at the bedouins, once to the left and once to the right and said, "O Muslims, I take oath on behalf of Rasûlullâh ﷺ that you will not do what you are doing until Khâlid ﷺ and I come to an agreement."

The killing and looting stopped and the horsemen, flag-bearers and generals went to meet at the church. Amongst them were Mu'âth bin Jabal, Yazîd bin Abî Sufyan, 'Amr bin al-'Âs, Shurahbîl bin Hasanah, Rabî'ah bin 'Âmir, 'Abdullâh bin 'Umar bin al-Khattâb and others ﷺ. A party which included Mu'âth ﷺ and Yazîd ﷺ said, "We feel that Abû 'Ubaydah's treaty should be implemented and the killing halted. All the cities have not yet been conquered and Heraclius is still in Antioch. If they find out about the surrender and its betrayal, then not a single city will surrender, whereas surrendering to you is better than killing them. (O Khâlid), you keep what you have taken by the sword while Abû 'Ubaydah administers for you his area. In the meantime, the two of you can write to the Khalîfah for arbitration and we will do whatever he says."

Khâlid ﷺ : I accept and grant them all temporary safety except for Thomas and Herbius.

(Thomas had appointed Herbius as sub-governor of half the city since he took power.)

Abû 'Ubaydah ☙ : Those two were the first to enter into the pact, so do not break my word, may Allâh have mercy on you.

Khâlid ☙ : Were it not for your word I would have killed them, but they will have to leave the city. May Allâh curse them wherever they may go.

Abû 'Ubaydah ☙ : Then on these terms is their surrender.

Thomas and Herbius observed the argument and feared their destruction so they went with a translator to Abû 'Ubaydah ☙ and said, "What is that other one saying?"

Translator : What are you and your friend saying? Your friend intends treachery whereas we and the citizens have entered into a pact with you and he breaks it, which does not become you. So permit me and my companion to leave and go wherever we want to go to.

Abû 'Ubaydah ☙ : At the moment you are under my protection.

Translator : We remain your responsibility for three days, in whatever direction we go in. After three days your responsibility is over. Then, whoever of you meet us after three days and overcomes us can kill us or capture us as he desires.

Khâlid ☙ : We accept that, but you will not carry away with you anything except your food.

Abû 'Ubaydah ☙ : That condition will contravene the treaty because it allows them to leave with all their men and wealth.

Khâlid ☙ : Then I will allow it, except for weapons of which I will not let them take anything.

Thomas : We need weapons for the journey to defend ourselves until we reach our lands. Otherwise, we are now in your hands, decide what you will.

Abû 'Ubaydah ☙ : Let each man take one weapon only - sword or spear or knife or bow.

Thomas : We are pleased with that. We do not want more than one weapon each. But I fear that man, Khâlid, so I want this agreement in writing.

Abû 'Ubaydah ☙ : May your mother be bereft of you! It is not our 'Arab way to betray or lie. Abû Sulaymân's word is his word and his promise is his promise and he only speaks the truth.

50) Thomas leaves Damascus

The two Roman leaders left to gather their people and order them to evacuate Damascus. Heraclius had there a stock of about 300 bundles of brocade and golden robes. Thomas wished it all to be salvaged. He ordered a silk tent to be erected outside Damascus. The Romans came and took out the goods, wealth and bundles until they had extracted a massive amount. When Khâlid ؓ saw this great quantity he said, "How great is their luggage!"

وَلَوْلَآ أَن يَكُونَ ٱلنَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَٰحِدَةً لَّجَعَلْنَا لِمَن يَكْفُرُ

بِٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ لِبُيُوتِهِمْ سُقُفًا مِّن فِضَّةٍ وَمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُونَ

And were it not that mankind would have become one community (of disbelievers) We would have made for the Disbelievers in the Most Gracious, silver roofs for their houses and ladders whereby they ascend. [43:33]

Then he looked at them, seeing that they were like fleeing donkeys, none sparing a glance at his brother due to their intense haste. So he raised his hands skyward saying, "O Allâh, make this for us, make us its owners, make these goods sustenance for the Muslims. O Allâh, accept this du'â. Verily you are the Hearer of du'âs."

Then he said to his men, "I have an idea, will you follow me in it?"

Muslims : We will follow you and not oppose you.

Khâlid ؓ : Prepare your horses and weapons, for after three days I will go with you in pursuit of these people with the hope that Allâh will grant us all this wealth you see. My heart tells me that they have taken every last good robe and item out of Damascus with them.

Muslims : Do as you please, we will not object.

They then began making preparations.

Thomas and Herbius gathered the amount Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ had fined them with and gave it to him. He said, "You have fulfilled your duty, now go wherever you want to with three days' guarantee of safety from us."

Yazîd bin Zharîf narrates:

After they paid the fine, they left like a black thunder cloud. A large part of the population of Damascus left with their children, disliking to stay with the Muslims. Khâlid ﷺ argued with those who remained behind over the large supply of wheat and barley that remained, so Abû 'Ubaydah said, "It belongs to the Damascenes according to the treaty."

His party and Khâlid's ﷺ party became heated in their disagreement until they agreed to write to Abû Bakr ﷺ for his decision, not knowing that he had passed away on the day they had entered Damascus.

'Aṯîyah bin 'Âmir narrates:

I was standing at the gate of Damascus on the day that the Romans, including Heraclius's daughter, departed with Thomas and Herbius. I saw Ḏirâr ﷺ looking at them askance, regretful at what had not been taken from them. I said to him, "O Ibn al-Azwar, why do I see you so regretful? Does Allâh not have more than that?"

Ḏirâr ﷺ : I do not want the money, but I am regretful that they are all still living and are escaping us. Abû 'Ubaydah made a bad deal for us.

I said, "O Ibn al-Azwar, the trustworthy one of the Ummah only desired good for the Muslims by saving their blood and sparing their wives from the fatigue of war. Indeed the sanctity of one human life is better than whatever the sun has risen upon. Allâh has placed mercy in the hearts of the Believers and has stated in some of His revealed books, 'The Rabb does not have mercy on those who do not have mercy,' and has also said:

وَٱلصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ

And reconciliation is best. [4:128]

Ḏirâr ﷺ : You have spoken the truth, but bear witness that I have no mercy for those who ascribe a wife and son unto Allâh.

51) Jonah and his wife

'Umar bin 'Îsâ narrates from 'Abdul Wâhid bin 'Abdillâh al-Basrî who narrates from Wâthilah bin al-Asqa' ﷺ:

I was in the Damascus army of Khâlid bin al-Walîd ﷺ. It was he who put me in Dirâr's ﷺ cavalry which had to patrol the city from the Eastern Gate to the Thomas Gate to the Peace Gate to al-Jâbiyah Gate to the Small Gate to the Songstresses' Gate. One day, before the conquest of Damascus, we heard the screeching of the gate. A horseman emerged whom we left until he came near. Then we seized him by the hand and said, "Say a word and we will kill you." He was silent. Then another came out calling for the first one whom we had captured, so we said to the prisoner, "Speak to him until he comes here." So he said in his gibberish Greek, "The bird is in the net."

The other realised that he was captured and so returned and locked the gate. We wanted to kill the prisoner but some said, "Do not kill him until we take him to Commander Khâlid."

So we took him to Khâlid ﷺ who asked him, "Who are you?"

Jonah : I am from the Roman lands. I had married a girl of my nation before your invasion. I love her very much, so when the siege lengthened, I asked her family to send her to me, but they refused, saying, "We are too busy to send her to you."

I wanted to meet her, so we agreed to meet at a recreation ground in which we used to spend time. We met there where she asked me to go with her outside the city. We opened the gate and I went out to see the situation when your men captured me. She called out to me so I said, "The bird is in the net," to warn her against you for I feared for her. If it was someone else I would not have bothered.

Khâlid ﷺ : What is your opinion of Islâm?

Jonah : I bear witness that there is no deity but Allâh and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh.

Thereafter he fought with us and fought fiercely. When we entered the city peacefully he went to seek his wife. It was said to him, "She has become a nun."

He went to her but she did not recognise him. He said, "Why have you become a nun?"

Wife : I was in love with my husband. When he was captured by the 'Arabs, I became a nun out of grief.

Yûnus (Jonah) : I am your husband and I have entered the religion of the 'Arabs.

Wife : What do you want with me?

Yûnus : That you stay (with me) under Muslim rule.

Wife : I swear by Christ that I will never do that. That is impossible.

She then left with Thomas.

Yûnus went to complain to Khâlid who replied, "Abû 'Ubaydah conquered the city by treaty, so you have no authority over her."

When he found out that Khâlid ﷺ was leaving in pursuit of them, he said, "I will go with him, perhaps I will catch her."

Khâlid ﷺ remained until the fourth day when Yûnus, the Damascene, went to him and said, "O commander, did you not resolve to go in pursuit of Thomas and Herbius and take whatever is with them?

Khâlid ﷺ : Yes.

Yûnus : Then what is stopping you?

Khâlid ﷺ : They have gone for four days and nights and travel fast, fleeing us. We will not be able to catch them.

Yûnus : If distance is your excuse, then know that I know these lands best and I am the speediest traveller. If Allâh wills, we will catch them, but dress like the Christian 'Arabs of Lakhm and Ju<u>th</u>âm. Take provisions and go.

Khâlid ﷺ took 4,000 cavalry and ordered them to go with light provisions. They went with Khâlid ﷺ and Yûnus in front to act as guide, tracking down the Damascenes. Khâlid ﷺ had left Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ in charge of Damascus and the Muslims.

Zayd bin Zharîf narrates:

Yûnus was our guide who found their tracks. They had left whatever bundles had fallen off the camels untouched. Whenever we entered a Roman town, they thought

that we were Christian 'Arabs of Lakhm and Juthâm until the guide brought us close to the coast. He continued following the tracks until he found that they had come to Antioch but had not entered. Confused, he went to a nearby village to question the people. They replied that Caesar had been informed that Thomas and Herbius had surrendered Damascus to the 'Arabs and was therefore angry at them. He did not allow them to come to him because he had gathered great armies to be sent to al-Yarmûk and feared that if the two of them spoke to the soldiers their hearts would weaken when hearing of the bravery of the 'Arabs. He therefore sent them to Constantinople.

Yûnus had separated from the Muslims to investigate.

Khâlid ﷺ had finished leading the Muslims in Salâh when Yûnus returned and said, "O commander! I have led you to a dead end."

Khâlid ﷺ : How is that?

Yûnus : You sent me in their tracks to this place hoping to catch them, but Caesar prohibited them from entering Antioch so that they do not scare his army. He has ordered them to head for Constantinople; there is this great mountain between you and them. You are by a mountain deep in Heraclius's territory and he is gathering an army to fight you. I fear that if you cross the mountain you will be destroyed, but the choice is yours. I have done whatever you have ordered me to.

52) Khâlid's ﷺ dream

Dirâr ﷺ narrates:

I saw Khâlid's ﷺ colour change to green out of fear, a quality I did not associate with him, so I said, "O commander, what frightens you?"

Khâlid ﷺ : O Dirâr, by Allâh! I do not fear death nor being killed. What I fear is that the Muslims will suffer due to me for I have seen a frightening dream before the conquest of Damascus and await its interpretation. I hope that Allâh will grant us goodness and victory over the enemy.

Dirâr ﷺ : Goodness! Allâh willing, I only see goodness! What did you see?

Khâlid ﷺ : I saw us travelling in a barren land when we came across a herd of wild donkeys, big-bodied but small-hoofed. Our spears could not wound them and they were not concerned about our swords hitting them and hurting them, nor showed any

anxiety whatsoever. This carried on with great effort from our side and from our horses. I then split up my men to attack them from all four sides so they shied away from us and went to mountain passes, hills and fertile valleys. We only caught a few. While we were roasting them, the others returned to fight us. I was looking at them when the mountain passes and jungles called out to the Muslims, "Mount your horses in pursuit of them. May Allâh bless you."

The Muslims and myself mounted and chased them until I caught a great donkey and killed him. The Muslims started hunting and killing until only a few were left. I was overjoyed and wanted to return with the Muslims to their homeland when I fell off my horse and my turban flew off my head. I wanted to pick it up but awoke afraid and frightened. Can any of you interpret this? I think it is about our current state.

Everyone took this badly and Khâlid ﷺ intended to return when 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr ﷺ said, "The donkeys are the Romans we are chasing. Your falling from your horse is your decline from a high position to a low position. As for the falling of your turban, well turbans are the crowns of 'Arabs, so it is some lowering of status you will encouter."

Khâlid ﷺ : If that is the interpretation then I ask Allâh to make it a matter of the world and not the Hereafter. I seek Allâh's help and rely upon Him in every matter.

Khâlid ﷺ, with the guide ahead, crossed the mountain. We hoped to capture the Romans the following morning and that night, it rained as if water was being poured from waterskins. Through Allâh's mercy, the rain stopped the Romans from further travel.

Rawh bin Tarîf narrates:

We were travelling with the rain falling on us the whole night like water being poured from water-skins. At sunrise, Yûnus said, "O commander! Halt here until I find them. They are doubtlessly close to us for I have heard their shouting."

Khâlid ﷺ : Have you truly heard them, O Yûnus?

Yûnus : Yes, permit me to go and gather information on them.

Khâlid ﷺ turned to al-Mufrit bin Ja'dah and said, "Go with Yûnus and beware of them discovering the two of you."

Al-Mufrit : I hear and obey Allâh and you.

The two left and climbed al-Abrash Mountain which the Romans call 'Cold Mountain'.

Al-Mufrit narrates:

When we reached the top, we saw a great meadow filled with much large vegetation. The Romans had been caught in the rain and their baggage was soaked. The sun was still covered so they feared it being damaged. They took out the brocade, spread it out in the meadow and then most of them slept due to the difficulty of the journey, fatigue and rain. When I saw that, I was happy and returned to Khâlid ﷺ leaving behind Yûnus. When he saw me alone he hurried towards me thinking Yûnus had been captured and said, "What is behind you? Tell me quickly?"

Al-Mufrit : Good (news) and booty, O commander! They are behind this mountain, soaked with rain. They are resting in the sun and have spread out their goods.

Khâlid ﷺ : May Allâh bless you.

I perceived in his face great overwhelming joy and then suddenly Yûnus appeared and said, "Glad tidings, O commander! They are complacent, but please order your men that whoever comes across my wife should guard her, for I want nothing from the booty besides her."

Khâlid ﷺ : She is yours if Allâh wills.

Khâlid ﷺ then divided his men into four divisions of 1,000 each, one under Dirâr, one under Râfi' bin 'Umayrah, one under 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr and one under himself ﷺ.

Khâlid ﷺ : Go with the blessings of Allâh, but avoid going together. Instead, each group should go in intervals.

They spread out with Dirâr ﷺ first attacking the complacent Romans followed by Râfi' bin 'Umayrah then 'Abdurahmân, then Khâlid ﷺ.

'Ubayd bin Sa'îd narrates :

By Allâh! We were entranced by the beautiful sight when Khâlid said, "Get the enemies of Allâh. Do not occupy yourselves with the booty and looking at the meadow, for if Allâh wills it will all be yours." When the Romans saw the Muslim horsemen led by Khâlid ﷺ coming, they rushed for their weapons, mounted their

horses and said to each other, "These are but a few horses which Christ has brought to you as booty, so rush to them."

So they went forth thinking that Khâlid's رضي الله عنه squadron was alone, when Dirâr رضي الله عنه emerged with 1,000 horsemen, then Râfi' bin 'Umayrah and then 'Abdurahmân. Each squadron spread out, surrounded the Romans and targeted a different group shouting out, "There is no deity but Allâh and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh!"

The horses descended upon them like a stream.

Herbius called out to their men, "Defend what you have been blessed with. They will never leave this place."

So one group went with him while another group of 500 horsemen went against Khâlid رضي الله عنه under the leadership of Thomas, carrying a golden cross encrusted with jewels. Khâlid رضي الله عنه attacked him shouting, "O enemy of Allâh, did you think that you could escape us when Allâh folds up the earth for us?"

Abân's رضي الله عنه widow had pierced one of Thomas's eyes, so Khâlid رضي الله عنه stabbed his other eye and gouged it out. He then flung him off his horse while his men attacked the Romans. 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr رضي الله عنه was most amazing. No sooner had he seen Thomas falling, than he jumped off his horse, sat on his chest, cut off his head, raised it on his spear-point and called out, "By Allâh! The accursed Thomas is killed," and then went in search of Herbius, with the Muslims cheering.

53) Yûnus and the princess

Râfi' bin 'Umayrah narrates:

I was in the right-wing with Khâlid رضي الله عنه when I saw a horseman in Roman attire dismounting and struggling with a Roman nun who got the better of him. I went to have a better look and saw that it was Yûnus struggling like a lion with his wife. I went to help him but then he pointed out a group of ten women aiming rocks at my saddle. A most beautiful woman wearing brocade threw a large rock which struck my horse's forehead. My horse, which had partaken in the Battle of Yamâmah, now fell down dead. I ran after her and she fled like a hunted deer with the other women behind her. I caught up to them, intending to kill them. I shouted, targeting the one who killed my horse. She screamed for help when I raised my sword. I stopped and went towards her. She was wearing brocade and had on her head a net of pearls. I

took her prisoner and tied her up. I retraced my steps, mounted a Roman horse and said to myself, "By Allâh! I must go and see what has happened to Yûnus." I found him crying and sitting with his wife who was covered in her own blood. I said to her, "Become a Muslim." She replied, "By Christ, I will never join you people." Then she took out a knife and committed suicide. I said, "Allâh has given you a replacement better than her. She wears brocade, has a net of pearls on her head and is more beautiful than the moon. So take her in place of your wife." He said, "Where is she?" I replied, "Here, this woman who is with me."

When he saw her, her dress and her ornaments and realised how extremely beautiful she was, he began speaking to her in Greek and asked her her identity. She replied in Greek and wept. He then turned to me and exclaimed, "Do you know who this is?"

I replied, "No."

He said, "She is Heraclius's daughter, Thomas's wife. Someone like me is not suited for her. Heraclius will definitely look for her and pay her ransom."

It is narrated that the Muslims could not find Khâlid ﷺ or any trace of him and were greatly worried about him. He was in fact deep in battle aiming for Herbius after Thomas was killed. While attacking in all directions, he spotted a heavily-built, red-coloured Christian whom he thought must be the accursed one, so he headed towards him on his horse with great effort to kill him. When the Christian saw him coming he fled, but Khâlid ﷺ hit him with his spear and he fell down on the ground on his head. Khâlid pounced on him like a lion saying, "O Herbius, did you think that you could escape me? Destruction be upon you."

The Christian knew 'Arabic and replied, "O 'Arab, I am not Herbius so spare me and do not kill me."

Khâlid ﷺ : Your only way out is to lead me to him. When you have done that, I will release you.

Christian : You are sure that you will let me go if I show him to you?

Khâlid ﷺ : I am sure. You will be released.

Christian : O 'Arab brother, get off my chest so that I can show him to you.

When Khâlid ﷺ got off he sprang up, looked right and left and said, "Look towards the mountain. One of those horses climbing is mounted by him." Khâlid ﷺ handed him over to Ibn Jâbir and then gave his horse free rein in pursuit of the enemy.

He caught up to them and shouted, “Did you think that you could escape me?”

When Herbius heard him, he shouted out and turned back with the armed patricians. Khâlid ﷺ said, “Destruction be upon you! Do you think that Allâh would not give us power over you? I am the valiant horseman, Khâlid bin al-Walîd.”

Then he stabbed and finished off one horseman followed by a second. Herbius called out to his men, “He is the one who turned Syria upside down, he is the invader of Busrâ, Hawrân, Damascus and Ajnâdayn. Get him.” They entertained hopes of catching him since he was alone, separated from the rest of the Muslims who were fighting and pillaging the Romans, each one concerned with his own matters. Due to the rough terrain of the mountain, the patricians dismounted and surrounded Khâlid ﷺ on foot. He too dismounted and stood firm and patient with sword and shield in hand to fight them.

54) Herbius is killed

Shaddâd bin Aws ﷺ, who was present at the Meadow of Brocade, narrates:

Khâlid ﷺ said to himself, “The dream has turned out to be true.”

Then while he was busy fighting them, Herbius came from behind and struck him with his sword cutting right through his turban and helmet. Herbius's sword then fell from his hand. Khâlid ﷺ feared that if he turned to Herbius the others would attack him from behind, but if he fought them, then Herbius would escape. So he began shouting, “Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!” and recited salutations upon Rasûlullâh ﷺ with great joy so as to deceive the Christians into thinking that he was about to receive help. The Muslims heard a sound and came from behind the Romans shouting, “Lâ ilaha illâllâh! Allâhu Akbar!” One voice stood out saying, “Lâ ilâha illallâh Muhammadur Rasûlullâh! Help has come to you from the Rabb of all the worlds. I am ‘Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr as-Siddîq.”

Khâlid ﷺ paid no attention to them, but began tearing the enemy ranks apart with his attacks in all directions. Upon hearing the Muslims, Herbius wanted to flee, but Khâlid ﷺ caught him and struck him dead in a single blow and Allâh sped his soul to Hell. The Companions of Rasûlullâh ﷺ then descended upon the companions of Herbius and finished off every last one of them. Dirâr ﷺ killed most of them. When Khâlid's ﷺ anxiety left him and he saw what Dirâr ﷺ had achieved, he exclaimed, “May you be blessed in your every action. May you triumph in your every deed. May my Rabb keep you in a good state.”

Then he went to make salâm to 'Abdurahmân ﷺ and all the Muslims and asked, "How did you locate me?"

'Abdurahmân ﷺ : O saved one, Allâh granted us victory over the Romans so we were busy in collecting the booty when suddenly a voice from the wind said, "You are busy with booty while the Romans surround Khâlid!"

However, we still did not know where you were and searched for you. A Christian held captive by your men pointed your position out to us and said, "I showed him where Herbius is. He is now with him at that mountain," and so we came to you.

Khâlid ﷺ : He had shown us Herbius and had shown me to the Muslims, so now his rights against us have been confirmed.

He then returned with them to the Muslims who, when they saw him, rushed to him to make salâm. He returned their salâm and called for the Christian who had shown him Herbius and said to him, "You fulfilled your duty and now we have to fulfil our promise. At the same time, you gave us advice so now we will give you advice - if you join the Dîn of Salâh and Fasting and the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ you will become of the people of Paradise."

He replied, "I have no desire to change my religion," so Khâlid ﷺ let him go.

Nawfal bin 'Amr narrates:

I saw him mounting his horse and heading on his own to Roman territories. The booty and prisoners were all gathered as Khâlid ﷺ had ordered. When he witnessed their great quantity, he praised Allâh abundantly and thanked Him. Then calling his guide, Prince Yûnus, said to him, "What did you do to your wife?"

Yûnus narrated the whole incident which astonished Khâlid ﷺ.

Râfi' : O commander, I captured Heraclius's daughter and gave her to him as a substitute for his wife.

Khâlid ﷺ : Where is she?

When she was brought before him, Khâlid ﷺ saw her great beauty. He turned away from her and said, "You are pure from all blemishes. O Allâh, all praise belongs to You alone. You create and choose what You want to."

وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ وَيَخْتَارُ

And your Rabb creates what He wants to and chooses. [28:68]

"Do you (Yûnus) wish to take her in place of your wife?"

Yûnus : Yes, except that Heraclius will doubtlessly want to ransom her or free her violently.

Khâlid ﷺ : Take her for now. If he does not look for her, then she is yours and if he does then Allâh will give you better than her in return.

Yûnus : O commander, you are in a tight and difficult situation, so leave now before enemy forces arrive.

Khâlid ﷺ : Allâh is for us and with us.

He then pressed forth in returning with the booty ahead of him. The Muslims were behind him, joyous at the booty obtained, their safety enjoyed and victory granted.

55) Khâlid's ﷺ gift to Heraclius

Rawh̲ bin 'At̲îyah narrates:

We traversed the whole road without a single Roman appearing against us, although we were right in the centre of enemy territory. Upon reaching the Small Meadow near Umm H̲akîm Canal, we saw dust rising from behind us, which made us apprehensive. Someone went to go and inform Khâlid who said, "Who will go and investigate it for me?" A man from the Ghifâr tribe, S̲a's̲a'ah bin Yazîd said, "I, O commander."

He got off his horse and ran ahead on foot because he was faster than a horse. He reached the dust-cloud, investigated it and returned calling out, "O commander, the Christians have caught us. They are completely covered in iron with nothing visible of their bodies except for their eyes."

When the (Roman) cavalry neared, Khâlid ﷺ called Yûnus the guide and instructed him, "O Yûnus, go to the cavalry and see what they want."

Yûnus : I hear and obey.

He went and returned to report, "O commander, did I not tell you that Heraclius would not neglect to go in search of his daughter? He has sent this cavalry to retrieve the booty from the Muslims, but now that you are close to Damascus, they are sending a messenger to ask you to either sell the girl or to gift her back. Khâlid began discussing the matter with the Muslims until an old man wearing the garb of a travelling priest came to the Muslims, who brought him before Khâlid ﷺ.

Khâlid ﷺ : Say what you have got to say.

Priest : I am the messenger of Heraclius Caesar. He says to you, "I have been informed of what you have done to my men and of your killing of Thomas, my son-in-law, and violating my sanctity. You have attained victory and safety, so do not over-step the bounds with my daughter who is with you. So now either sell my daughter or gift her back to me, for indeed generosity is in your nation's character and nature. Remember that he who does not show mercy is not shown mercy. I also hope to reach a peace settlement with you.

Khâlid ﷺ : Tell your master that I shall not leave him and the Christians until I have his throne and the very ground under his feet. (O Heraclius), you know this. If you knew a way to come against us you would not have hesitated. As for your daughter take her as a present from us.

Khâlid ﷺ then handed her over to the old man without taking anything as ransom. When the messenger informed Heraclius, he said to the Roman leaders, "This is what I was telling you about, but you did not want to accept it and wanted to kill me. Soon things will get even more serious, but this is not from you but from the Lord of Heaven."

The Romans wept bitterly at this.

56) The martyr

Khâlid ﷺ reached Damascus where Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and the Muslims had lost hope over him and were greatly depressed. When Khâlid ﷺ arrived they came out to welcome him and the Muslims began greeting each other. Khâlid ﷺ found 'Amr bin Ma'dîkarab ﷺ, Mâlik bin al-Ashtar ﷺ and their men in Damascus. He went to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who, upon being told of the expedition, was highly impressed by his exploits. He then took out the state's one-fifth share of the booty and distributed the

remainder amongst the Muslims. Giving Yûnus something from his own share, he said, "Take this and use it to get married or buy a Roman slave-girl."

Yûnus : By Allâh! I will never marry a woman of this world. I will only marry 'Aynâ the virgin damsel of Paradise.

Râfi' bin 'Umayrah narrates:

He fought with us until al-Yarmûk. There I saw him fighting earnestly in the Path of Allâh, greatly inflicting the Romans until an arrow pierced his throat and he fell down dead, may Allâh have mercy on him. Then I saw him in a dream, wearing glittering clothing and golden sandals wandering in a lush garden. I said to him, "How has Allâh treated you?" He replied, "He has forgiven me and given me seventy women of Paradise. Were one of them to appear in the world, the light of her face would eclipse both the sun and moon. May Allâh reward you all well."

I related this to Khâlid ﷺ who said, "By Allâh! That is nothing but martyrdom. How fortunate is he who attains it."

57) Khalid's ﷺ letter

I (al-Wâqidî) have been informed that when Khâlid ﷺ returned from his expedition with the booty, he desired to write to Abû Bakr ﷺ of the victory and booty, thinking that he was still alive. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had not informed him (of his demise) and that 'Umar ﷺ was the new Khalîfah. So he called for an ink-pot and paper and wrote:

> *In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*
>
> *To : 'Abdullâh, the Khalîfah of Rasûlullâh*
>
> *From : His governor of Syria, Khâlid bin al-Walîd*
>
> *Salâm 'Alayka*
>
> *I praise Allâh besides whom there is no other deity and I send salutations upon His Prophet Muhammad.*
>
> *We continued suffering from the enemy in attacking Damascus until Allâh sent down upon us His help and conquered His*

enemy. Damascus was conquered with the sword from the Eastern Gate but the Romans deceived Abû 'Ubaydah ‎ who was at the al-Jâbiyah Gate and reached a peace agreement with him which has prevented me from enslaving or killing them. We met him at the Church of Mary, with priests and monks in front of him, holding the treaty. Caesar's son-in-law, Thomas, and another man called Herbius left the city with enormous wealth and fat bundles (of brocade). I followed them with an army and snatched the booty from their hands and killed the two accursed ones. I made Heraclius's daughter prisoner and then gifted her back to him, returning safely. I am awaiting your orders.

Was-salâm 'alayka.

Salutations and salâm be on our master, Muhammad, his family and Sahâbah.

He folded the letter, sealed and stamped it and sent it with 'Abdullâh bin Qurt to al-Madînah, where the new Khalîfah, 'Umar bin al-Khattab read the opening and said, "Do the Muslims not know that Abû Bakr has died?"

Ibn Qurt : No, O commander of the Believers.

'Umar : I had sent a letter to Abû 'Ubaydah with this news and also dismissing Khalîd and appointing him over the Muslims, knowing him undesirous of that post.

He then continued reading the letter.

Part 2

Hims

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Part 2

Hims

1) The new Khalîfah

The historians (who have narrated from such narrators mentioned at the outset) have narrated the events of the Conquests of Syria (with all chains of narrations from reliable narrators) viz Muhammad bin Ishâq, Yûsuf bin 'Amr, and Abû 'Abdillah Muhammad bin 'Umar al-Wâqidî who have all narrated from a chain of reliable narrators:

Upon the demise of Abû Bakr ﷺ, 'Umar ﷺ became the Khalîfah at the age of 52. The people pledged an oath of allegiance to him in the Masjid of Rasûlullâh ﷺ with no one, neither old nor young, disagreeing. During his rule disunity and hypocrisy were uprooted, falsehood was terminated, truth established, the power of the state strengthened, the plots of the Devil weakened and Allâh's affair became victorious even though the Disbelievers disliked it.

Amongst his noble characteristics was that he would sit with the poor, be kind to people and Muslims in particular, be merciful towards the young, respect the elderly, show compassion to the orphan, grant justice to the wronged until all rights were fulfilled and those who merely criticised would never concern him.

During his rule he would patrol the markets of al-Madînah, dressed in rags and carrying his whip which was more feared than the swords of kings.

His food was barley bread and his gravy was crushed salt. Sometimes he would leave the salt out of abstinence, caution and compassion towards the Muslims, desiring nothing but Allâh's reward. Nothing could prevent him from fulfilling his duty towards Allâh or the Sunnah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

'Âishah narrates:

By Allâh! As soon as 'Umar ؓ became the Khalîfah he set to work with great effort and without any arrogance. His teeth would bite into nothing besides barley bread and salt and he would often have olive oil and dried dates too. Sometimes he would have butter and say, "I hate olive oil and barley bread, but hunger today is lighter than the fire of Hell. Whoever falls therein never dies nor does he find any relief. Its stay is long, its punishment severe, its drink is pus and no permission is given to them to offer excuses."

During his rule he systematised the military, despatched armies, conquered many lands and built cities. May Allâh be pleased with him.

2) The assassin

I (al-Waqidî) have been informed that when Heraclius heard of 'Umar ؓ succeeding Abû Bakr ؓ, he summoned all the patricians, princes of the realm and ministers. He then stood to address them, standing on a pulpit erected for him in a church, "O Romans, this is what I warned you about, but you would not listen. With the ascension of this brown man, the situation will only worsen. The time has drawn near for a conqueror to come who will resemble Noah. I swear by God that he will most certainly rule what is beneath this platform on which I stand. Beware! Beware before this occurs and great harm befalls, palaces are demolished, priests are massacred and church bells smashed. This is a man of war who will bring grief to Rome and Persia. He abstains from the world and is stern against those who do not follow his religion but follow what they like. I have hope that you will triumph if you order the good and forbid the bad, leave injustice, follow Christ in all that is compulsory to obey, abstain from adultery and fornication and, in fact, all kinds of sinning. If you refuse and stick to corruption, sinning, wickedness and worldly passions, God will give your enemy power over you and inflict you with that over which you have no power. I know that the religion of these people will triumph over every other religion for as long as they do not change, so either you go to their religion or submit and pay Jizyah."

As soon as they heard these words they rushed towards him, intending to kill him but he managed to pacify them and said, "I merely wished to see how loyal you are to your religion and if fear of the 'Arabs is firmly embedded in your hearts or not."

Then he called a Christian 'Arab, Talî'ah bin Mârân, and promised him great wealth saying, "Go immediately to Yathrib and see if you can kill 'Umar bin al-Khattâb."

Talî'ah : Yes, Caesar.

He made his preparations and upon reaching al-Madînah, hid in the outskirts to ambush 'Umar ﷺ. 'Umar ﷺ came to oversee the wealth of the orphans and inspect their gardens. The Christian climbed up a tree with twisting branches and hid amongst the leaves. 'Umar ﷺ went to that very tree and fell asleep, lying on his back and using a stone as a pillow. The Christian was about to climb down to kill him, when suddenly a creature appeared from the desert, circled 'Umar ﷺ and licked his feet. An unseen voice proclaimed, "O 'Umar, you have maintained justice, so you are safe." When 'Umar ﷺ awoke, the beast left and the Christian climbed down. He threw himself at 'Umar ﷺ, kissed his hands and said, "May my father and mother be ransom for such a creation whom the beasts guard, the angels describe and the Jinn know."

Then he told him the whole story and embraced Islâm at his hands.

3) Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ appointment

'Umar ﷺ then wrote the following letter to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ:

I have appointed you over Syria and made you commander of the Muslims. Khâlid is dismissed. Was-salâm.

He despatched the letter with 'Abdullâh bin Qurt ﷺ. He remained anxious over the affairs of the Muslims, paying special attention to Syria.

'Abdullâh bin Sâlim narrates from his reliable teachers:

'Abdurahmân bin Awf az-Zuhrî narrated the following dream to 'Umar ﷺ which he saw on the same night that Abû Bakr ﷺ passed away: I saw Damascus with the Muslims around her. Their cries of "Allâhu Akbar" reached my ears. With their shouts and attacks, a fort began to sink into the earth until I could not see anything of it remaining. I saw Khalid ﷺ entering her with the force of the sword as if there was something like a fire in front of him into which he fell and then it was extinguished.

'Alî ﷺ : Glad tidings! If Allâh wills, it means that they conquered Damascus today.

A few days later 'Uqbah bin 'Âmir al-Juhanî ﷺ, the Sahâbî of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, brought the letter describing the victory. He narrates:

'Umar ﷺ : O Ibn 'Âmir, when did you leave?

'Uqbah ﷺ : Friday.

'Umar ﷺ : What news have you brought?

'Uqbah ﷺ : Glad tidings which I will announce to Abû Bakr ﷺ.

'Umar ﷺ : Allâh has taken him in a good state. He has gone to His generous Rabb. 'Umar now bears the burden. If he is just he will be saved, if he abandons justice or confuses matters then he will be destroyed.

I wept and invoked Allah's mercy upon Abû Bakr as-Siddîq, may Allâh be pleased with him. I handed the letter over to 'Umar who read it, but did not announce its contents until Salâtul Jumu'ah. After the Khutbah and Salâh, he ascended the mimbar. The people gathered around him, and he read out the letter. The Muslims were overjoyed and called out, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!"

He then descended and wrote to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ appointing him as commander and dismissing Khâlid ﷺ. He then handed me the letter, ordering me to return. I returned to Damascus to find that Khâlid had gone in pursuit of Thomas and Herbius. I delivered the letter to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, who did not announce Abû Bakr's ﷺ death and kept quiet about his appointment and Khâlid's ﷺ dismissal. Khâlid ﷺ then returned from his expedition and wrote a letter describing the conquest of Damascus, their victory against the enemy, the booty of Brocade Meadow and the release of Heraclius's daughter.

He then handed the letter to 'Abdullâh bin Qurt ﷺ who delivered it to 'Umar ﷺ. When he read the opening, "*From Khâlid bin al-Walîd to Abû Bakr as-Siddîq,*" he disliked it and said, "O Ibn Qurt, do the people not know of Abû Bakr's death and my appointment of Abû 'Ubaydah?"

Ibn Qurt ﷺ : No.

'Umar ﷺ got angry, gathered the people, stood on the mimbar and said, "O people, I had appointed Abu 'Ubaydah, the Trustworthy Man, because I felt him worthy and have dismissed Khâlid."

A Makhzûmî : Do you dismiss such a man through whom Allâh has unsheathed a cutting sword and granted victory? Neither Allâh, nor the Muslims will excuse you if you sheathe this sword and dismiss a commander who is ordered by Allâh. You would be breaking family ties.

'Umar ﷺ looked at him and found him to be quite young and so he said, "A youth, angry for the sake of his cousin," and got off the mimbar. He laid down and put the letter under his head, pondering over Khâlid's ﷺ dismissal until the next day.

After performing Salâtul Fajr, he mounted the mimbar, praised Allâh, sent salutations upon Rasûlullâh ﷺ, invoked mercy upon Abû Bakr ﷺ and said, "O people, I am burdened with great trust. I am a shepherd and every shepherd is accountable with regard to his flock. I have come to rectify your affairs and oversee your lives and that which will draw you and the people of your city closer to your Rabb. This is because I have heard Rasûlullâh ﷺ saying, *'He who is patient over the difficulties and evils of al-Madînah will have me interceding for him on the Day of Judgement.'* You have no agriculture or dairy to speak of except that which a camel brings from a distance of a month's journey. Allâh has promised us much booty and I intend that it reaches both the elite and the commoners. I will fulfil the trust and honour of the Muslims. I have no objection to Khâlid being governor, except that he is too lavish in spending – he gives the poet who praises him and gives the Mujâhid and horseman more than he is entitled to. Thus nothing remains for the poor and weak Muslims. I am therefore replacing him with Abu 'Ubaydah. Allâh knows best that I appoint him due to his trustworthiness, so none should say, 'You have dismissed the strong man and installed the soft man,' for Allâh is with him and assists him."

4) 'Umar's ﷺ letter

He got off the mimbar and wrote the following letter to Abu 'Ubaydah ﷺ on a piece of leather :

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

From : The slave of Allâh, 'Umar bin al-Khattab, the Commander of the Believers.

To : Abû 'Ubaydah 'Âmir bin al-Jarrâh

Salam 'Alayka

I praise Allâh besides whom there is no other deity and send salutations upon His Prophet Muhammad.

I have appointed you over the affairs of the Muslims, so do not be shy, for Allâh is not shy when it comes to the Truth. I advise you to fear Allâh Who will remain and besides Whom everything will perish. It is He who took you out of Disbelief into Faith and from Misguidance to Guidance. I have appointed you over the army which is with Khâlid. So take charge of his army and dismiss him from his post.

Do not send the Muslims into destruction desiring booty. Do not send a small expedition against a huge force. Do not say, "I hope victory for you," for victory is only with firm conviction and sticking to Allâh (not mere hope).

Beware of being deceived into throwing the Muslims towards destruction. Lower your gaze from the world and keep your heart occupied from it. Beware of being destroyed like those before you. You have seen their destruction and way of thought. Between you and the Hereafter is a covering through which your predecessors have passed. You are now like someone waiting for his journey from such an abode whose vigour has passed, whose beauty has faded and so its people have prepared their transports to go to another abode. Its provision is Fear of Allâh and to consider the Muslims as far as you are able to.

As for the wheat and barley which you found in Damascus and greatly argued about, it is for the Muslims. One-fifth of the gold and silver will be taken for the state and the rest is for the Mujâhidîn. As for your dispute with Khâlid about whether the conquest was by peaceful surrender or by conquest of the sword, well you are now the governor in charge. Your treaty is to be implemented with the Romans. Gifting Heraclius's daughter was wrong for a great ransom could have been obtained and spent on the weak Muslims.

Peace, Allâh's Mercy and Blessings be upon you and all the Muslims.

He folded the letter and stamped the seal with his ring. He then summoned 'Âmir bin Abî Waqqâs, brother of Sa'd bin Abî Waqqâs ﷺ, and said to him, "Go to Damascus and give this letter to Khâlid. Order him to assemble everyone and then you, O 'Âmir, should read it out to them. Also, inform him about Abû Bakr's ﷺ death."

Then he called Shaddâd bin Aws ﷺ, shook his hands and said, "Go with 'Âmir to Syria. After he reads the letter, order the people to render to you the oath of allegiance to represent the oath unto me."

The two hastened to Damascus where the people awaited news of Abû Bakr ﷺ and his orders. When the two arrived, everyone was happy at their arrival and eager to hear them. The two went to Khâlid's ﷺ tent, where 'Âmir said to him, "I have left 'Umar in a good state. I have this letter here which he has ordered me to read in front of everyone."

Khâlid ﷺ was doubtful and disliked it, but gathered the Muslims. When 'Âmir announced Abû Bakr's ﷺ death, they raised a great noise with their crying. Khâlid ﷺ also wept and said, "If Abû Bakr is dead and has appointed 'Umar as his successor, then we will hear him and obey his orders."

'Âmir then read out the letter to the end, after which they rendered the oath of allegiance to Shaddâd ﷺ.

This was in Damascus, 3 Sha'ban 13 Hijri.

5) Abû al-Quds expedition

I (al-Wâqidî) have been informed that Khâlid ﷺ became even sterner against the enemy and firmer in Jihâd after his dismissal, especially at Abû al-Quds Fort. I asked the narrator of this report about Abû al-Quds Fort. He said, "Between 'Irqa and Tripoli is a meadow called the Chain Meadow facing a complex of monasteries. In one cell there lived a monk who was knowledgeable in Christianity and had read the previous scriptures and histories of the past nations. The Romans came to him for knowledge. He was over 100 years old and annually a festival would be held at his monastery marking the end of the Roman fast. During this festival, Palm Sunday, the Christians would come to him from all places including coastal lands and Egypt. He would then look down at them from a high place and advise them from the Bible.

During that festival a great annual market would also be held. Goods, gold and silver would be brought to it, so that for three days buying and selling took place."

The Muslims were not aware of all this until a Christian, from those who pay Jizyah, told them of this. He had received protection for himself and his family. When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ took charge of the affairs of the Muslims, the Christian intended to go to him so that the monastery and market could be captured at his hands. He reached Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ while he had long been pondering over which Roman place to target next. Sometimes he would say, "I will take the army to Baytul Muqaddas for she is the noblest of all their cities and the seat of the Roman Empire upon which their religion is based." At other times, he would say, "I will go to Antioch to target Heraclius and be rid of him." He had already gathered the Muslims and was still in this state of confusion when the Syrian Christian came to him.

Christian : O Commander, you have been most kind to me, have granted me safety and spared my wife, family and wealth. I will now tell you of such booty which, if God grants it to the Muslims, they will be wealthy and never suffer from poverty thereafter.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Tell us of this booty and its location, for I know you to be a well-wisher.

Christian : Facing you is a fort on the coast known as Abû al-Quds Fort. Opposite it is a monastery where a monk lives. The Christians seek blessings through his prayers and learn from him. He celebrates an annual festival in which people gather from every direction, town, city, village and monastery. There a great market is held in which they display their lavish clothing of brocade and their gold and silver for three or seven days. The time for that market is soon approaching, so seize all that is therein, kill the men and enslave the women and children. This is such a booty which will gladden the Muslims and it will humiliate your enemy through its loss.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ *(happy at this prospect)* : How far away is this monastery?

Christian : Ten Farsakh (54.9 km) on a strenuous route.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : When will the market be held?

Christian : In a few days time.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : What kind of security do they have to keep them in control?

Christian : We do not know of such a thing in Caesar's realm because fear of Heraclius sits in their hearts, so they do not interfere with each other.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Are there any cities near it?

Christian : Yes, Tripoli, the economic hub of Syria, is nearby. Caravans come to Tripoli from all directions. A great experienced patrician, whom Caesar chose for his experience, stays there and attends the market. Although I do not know of any security at the market, there may be some now out of fear of you. Even if he goes and confronts the Muslims, I am sure that, God willing, they will be victorious.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called out, "O people, who amongst you gifts his life to Allâh, Most High, and will lead the army I am sending to conquer for the Muslims?"

Everyone kept silent so he asked a second time, hinting at Khâlid ﷺ but not saying it directly as he was embarrassed at his dismissal. A youth with thick hair hanging from the sides with a thick moustache stood up from amongst the people. He was 'Abdullâh bin Ja'far ﷺ, the son of Asmâ bint 'Umays al-Khath'amîyah and Ja'far ﷺ who had been martyred at Mutah when Abdullâh ﷺ was quite young. When he grew up he asked his mother, who had married Abû Bakr ﷺ, "O my mother, what has become of my father?" Asmâ replied, "O my son, the Romans killed him."

He would say, "If I live, I will avenge him." Upon Abû Bakr's demise and 'Umar's ﷺ ascension, he went to Syria with the expedition sent by 'Umar ﷺ under 'Abdullâh bin Unays al-Juhanî ﷺ. Ibn Ja'far ﷺ greatly resembled Rasûlullâh ﷺ in both character and physique and was counted amongst the generous ones.

6) Ibn Ja'far ﷺ and the monk

When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called out, "O people, who will go to the monastery?", Ibn Ja'far ﷺ sprang up and said, "I will be the first to join this expedition, O Trusted One of the Ummah." Abû 'Ubaydah was pleased and began selecting for him men from amongst the Muslims and horsemen from amongst those who hold Allâh to be One and said, "You will be the commander of this expedition, O cousin of Rasûlullâh ﷺ."

He tied a black flag for him and handed it over to him. His expedition consisted of 500 cavalry which included veterans of Badr. Amongst those who took part included Abû Tharr al-Ghifârî, 'Abdullâh bin Abî Awfâ, 'Âmir bin Rabî'ah, 'Abdullâh bin Unays, 'Abdullâh bin Tha'labah, 'Uqbah bin 'Abdillâh as-Sulamî, Wâthilah bin al-Asqa', Sahl bin Sa'ad, 'Abdullâh bin Bishr, as-Sâib bin Yazîd and other such great men; may Allâh be pleased with them all.

All 500 had witnessed many battles and had penetrated into the thick of war. They would never flee or even incline towards fleeing and were dependable in travel. When they had gathered under Ibn Ja'far's ﷺ flag, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ said, "O cousin of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, do not attack until the first day of the market is held." Then he bade them farewell and they departed.

(I hope this to be a sign of acceptance from Allâh that the following events of 15 Sha'bân 14 Hijrî were translated without prior planning on 15 Sha'bân 1423 Hijrî - translator's note)

They left Damascus for Abû al-Quds Monastery on the 15th night of Sha'bân with the moon bright.

Wâthilah bin al-Asqa' ﷺ narrates:

I was at the side of 'Abdullâh bin Ja'far ﷺ who said to me, "O Ibn al-'Asqa', how nice and bright the moon is tonight."

Wâthilah ﷺ : O cousin of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, this is the great and blessed night of mid-Sha'bân. During this night, provisions and lifespans are decreed and sins are forgiven. I had intended spending the night in Salâh, but our journeying in the Path of Allâh is better than that. Allâh is a generous giver.

Ibn Ja'far ﷺ : You have spoken the truth.

We continued travelling through the night until we came across the monastery of a monk wearing a black hooded cloak. He began to closely examine our faces, one by one. He stared for a long time at 'Abdullâh and then said, "Is this the son of your Prophet?"

Muslims : No.

Monk : The light of prophethood shines between his eyes. How did he get it?

Muslims : He is his cousin.

Monk : Then he is part of the leaf and the leaf is part of the tree.

Ibn Ja'far ﷺ : O monk, do you know Rasûlullâh?

Monk : How can I not know him when his name and description is in the Torâh, Gospel and Psalms? He is handsome with a reddish complexion and a drawn sword.

Ibn Ja'far ﷺ : So why do you not believe in him and accept him?

Monk (raising his hand to the sky) : I will believe when the Master of these skies wants me to.

We were shocked at his words and continued on our journey with the guide leading us. When we came to a valley filled with trees and water, he ordered us to camp there and said to Ibn Ja'far ﷺ, "I am going out to scout."

Ibn Ja'far ﷺ : Hurry and bring news back to us.

He hastened away while Ibn Ja'far ﷺ personally kept watch until morning.

7) The obstruction

In the morning we prayed Salâtul Fajr and sat waiting for the guide who did not return. His delay made us anxious and we feared some deception from him. The Devil began his whisperings which made all of us think of him as evil except for Abû Tharr ﷺ, who said, "Think good of your companion and do not fear any plot or deception from him for you know how he is."

We all kept quiet after that until he suddenly arrived. When we saw him we were overjoyed, thinking that he would tell us to get up to go to the enemy. He came and stood in the midst of the Muslims where he said, "O Companions of Muhammad, I swear by Christ, son of Mary, that I do not lie to you in what I am telling you. I sincerely wished the booty for you but there is an obstruction blocking your path to it."

Ibn Ja'far ﷺ : What is this obstruction?

Guide : It might as well be the sea that blocks you. I saw that the market had already started with buying and selling taking place. The Christians had gathered with most of them going to the monastery of Abû al-Quds where the priests, monks, princes and patricians gathered. When I saw all that, I did not want to return until I found out the reason why there were so many more people this year than any other year. I went and mixed with the crowd until I found out that the governor of Tripoli was marrying his daughter to a Roman prince. They brought her to receive Communion from the monk. She was surrounded by a large number of Christian 'Arab cavalry out of fear of you, as they know you Muslims to be in Syria. O Muslims, I do not consider it appropriate for you to go ahead because their numbers are absolutely huge.

Ibn Ja'far ﷺ : How many civilians and soldiers are there?

Guide : There are more than 20,000 civilians in the market including Romans and Armenians. There are Christians, Copts and Jews from Egypt, Syria and Africa. There are patricians and Christian 'Arabs. The soldiers number 5,000 against whom you have no power. They can easily call up a similar number of reinforcements from their lands which are adjoining, whereas the 'Arabs are far from you.

This news depressed Ibn Ja'far ﷺ and the Muslims who wished to return. Ibn Ja'far ﷺ said, "O Muslims, what is your opinion?"

Muslims : We believe that we should not fling ourselves into destruction as instructed by our Rabb in His book. We should take the matter up with the commander, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. Allâh will not let our reward go to waste.

Ibn Ja'far ﷺ : As for me, I fear that Allâh will write my name down amongst the deserters. I will not return and I will not offer weak excuses to Allâh, Most High. Allâh is responsible for the reward of whoever helps me, but there is no blame on whoever wishes to return.

Muslims (ashamed) : Do as you like, for precautions will not avail against what is predestined.

Ibn Ja'far ﷺ was delighted with this reply. He donned his armour, helmet, belt and his father's sword and mounted his horse. He took the flag in his hand and ordered the men to take their gear. They got the armour and weapons and mounted their horses, saying to the guide, "Take us to the enemy so that they may see amazing things from the Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ."

Wâthilah bin al-Asqa' ﷺ narrates:

I saw the guide's face turn yellow and his whole complexion change. He said, "You people can go and do that. I have no obligation in your matter." He started leaving, but Ibn Ja'far ﷺ won him over and he led them for a while. He then paused and said, "Wait here for you are now near to them. Hide here until dawn and then attack them."

We spent the night in the place he ordered us to, seeking Allâh's assistance against the enemy. At dawn Ibn Ja'far ﷺ led us in Salâtul Fajr and then said, "When do you people feel we should attack?"

'Âmir bin 'Umayrah bin Rabî'ah : I will show you a plan upon which you should act.

Muslims : Do tell us.

'Âmir : Attack them when they are fully occupied with their buying, selling and displaying of goods.

The Muslims all approved of this. They unsheathed their swords, tied their bow-strings and made general preparations with Ibn Ja'far ﷺ in front, carrying the flag. At sunrise he divided the Muslims into five squadrons of 100 each and said to each squadron-commander, "Each hundred should attack a different sector of the market. Do not become engrossed in loot and plunder, but place your swords in their heads and shoulders."

He then went forward and saw the Romans spread out, numerous as ants. A great crowd surrounded the monk's monastery. The monk had come out and was admonishing the people, advising them and teaching them about their religion while they attentively listened to him. The daughter of the patrician of Tripoli was in the monastery. All the patricians and their sons wore brocade covered with gold. Their upper bodies were covered with armour, glittering arm-guards and helmets. They were looking around, guarding their front and rear.

8) The Muslims are trapped

When Ibn Ja'far ﷺ saw the monastery, the monk and all that was surrounding them, he became afraid but called out, "O Sahabah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, attack! May Allâh bless you. If booty, happiness, victory and safety are for us then it is at that gathering by the monastery. If it is not to be, then we are promised Paradise and will meet each other at the pond of Rasûlullâh ﷺ with his Sahabah ﷺ."

He targeted the crowd, striking them with his sword and stabbing them with his spear, with the Muslims attacking behind him. When the Romans heard the Muslims calling out, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!", they thought that the armies of the Muslims had reached them. They were in fact expecting that and were alert against any attack, so the mob rushed towards their weapons to protect their lives and property. They unsheathed their swords and turned to attack the Muslims like savage lions. They searched for the flag, and finding only one, they surrounded those Muslims around the flag from every side fighting fiercely and began throwing up dust. The Muslims were so few that they were like a white spot on a black camel's skin. The Sahabah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ could only find each other through the cries of "Lâ ilâha illallâh" and "Allâhu Akbar!", but everyone was too busy with himself to come to another's rescue.

Abû Sabrah Ibrâhîm bin 'Abdil Azîz bin Abî Qays ﷺ, who was from the very first Muslims and had performed Hijrah twice, reports:

I witnessed Ethiopia with Ja'far bin Abî Tâlib, may Allah be pleased with him, and joined Rasûlullâh ﷺ at Badr, Uhud and Hunayn. I said to myself that I would partake in any similar event. When the soul of Rasûlullâh ﷺ was taken away, I grieved over him and was unable to remain in al-Madînah. I went to Makkah where I was reprimanded in a dream for abandoning Jihâd. So I went to Syria where I partook in the Battles of Ajnâdayn, Damascus, Khâlid's ﷺ pursuit of Thomas and Herbius and Ibn Ja'far's expedition. I was with him at the Monastery of Abû al-Quds when I experienced such an occurrence which I had not experienced with Rasûlullâh ﷺ. It was when we were attacking the Romans with such paltry numbers while they were so many that nothing could hide them from sight. We saw their fearsome bodies covered in armour which hid their entire bodies except for the eyes. They attacked like a great crashing storm until none of the Muslims were visible to me, everyone being trapped in their midst. I could not hear the Muslims except for some occasionally raised voices. I said to myself, "They have been destroyed."

Then I saw 'Abdullah bin Ja'far ﷺ raising the flag aloft, attacking the Disbelievers and not being repulsed. He was waging Jihâd at such a young age with the battle prolonging, its flames intensified and darkened. He was right in the centre of the enemy who had him surrounded. Wherever he tried to attack, they would respond in the same direction. We continued fighting until our arms grew weak and our shoulders numb. Matters became very bad. We lost patience and Ibn Ja'far's sword became blunt in his hands. His horse was about to collapse under him when he decided to take refuge with his men at a single place. His men gathered around him, and when other Muslims saw the flag they began heading towards it, everyone was wounded at the hands of the enemy. Ibn Ja'far's armour began pressing him but he was more distressed at the condition of the Muslims than at his own condition. He sought Allâh's protection, handed himself over to Allâh, raised his hands to the sky and said:

"O He who created His creation and tested some of them with others and made that a tribulation for them, I ask You through the rank of Prophet Muhammad upon whom be salutations and peace that You grant us ease and a way out in our affair."

Then he returned to the fight with the Sahabah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ fighting with him under his flag. Praise be to Allâh at how amazing Abû Tharr ﷺ was. He came to the aid of Rasûlullâh's ﷺ cousin and fought in front of him.

'Amr bin Sâ'idah narrates:

I saw him with an elderly man striking the Romans with his sword and advancing into their ranks. This man was saying as he attacked, "I am Abû Tharr !"

9) Ibn Unays ﷺ fetches help

'Abdullâh bin Unays al-Juhanî ﷺ narrates:

I loved Ja'far ﷺ and from amongst his sons I loved 'Abdullâh ﷺ. Then when 'Abdullâh's step-father, Abû Bakr ﷺ passed away, I saw that his mother, Asma bint 'Umays was greatly grieved and that sight pained me. Abû Bakr also loved 'Abdullâh intensely. Abdullâh bin Ja'far got permission from 'Umar bin al-Khattab to go to Syria and said to me, "O Ibn Unays al-Juhanî, I am going as a mujâhid with twenty horsemen to Syria. Will you accompany me?"

I said, "Yes."

He bade farewell to his uncle, 'Alî, and 'Umar, may Allâh be pleased with them both, and set off for Syria with the twenty horsemen until we reached Tabûk where he asked, "O Ibn Unays, do you know where my father's grave is?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "I wish to see it."

We continued until we reached the place, so I showed him where his father had fought and I showed him the grave which had a stone placed on it. When he saw it, he dismounted and we dismounted with him. He wept and invoked mercy upon his father. We remained there until the morning of the second day.

When we departed, I saw him weeping with his face resembling saffron. When I questioned him, he said, "I saw my father in a dream last night. He was wearing two green cloths and a crown. He had two wings and had in his hand a drawn green sword which he gave to me saying, 'O my son, fight your enemies with this, for whatever you see that I have attained has been by means of Jihâd.' It was then as if I fought with it until it became blunt."

We continued until we reached Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ army at Damascus.

When I saw the Romans trapping him, I said, "'Abdullâh is close to perishing."

I left like lightning and returned to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who asked me, "Do you have good news, O Ibn Unays, or bad?"

I said, "Send the Muslims to help 'Abdullâh bin Ja'far and those with him," and proceeded to give him a full report.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Verily we belong to Allâh and to Him do we return. Are 'Abdullâh bin Ja'far and those with him to be afflicted under your flag, O Abû 'Ubaydah, when this is his very first mission?

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ then turned to Khâlid ﷺ and said, "O Abû Sulaymân, I ask you in the name of Allâh to go to 'Abdullâh bin Ja'far for you are suitable for that."

Khâlid ﷺ : If Allâh wills then I am. I was only waiting for you to order me.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O Abû Sulaymân, I was shy to order you.

Khâlid ﷺ : By Allâh! Were a small child to order me I would obey. That being the case, how can I oppose you when your Faith is older than mine and you preceded me in Islâm along with those who preceded. You hastened to bring Faith along with those who hastened. How can it be possible for me to reach you or to attain your lofty status with all that to your credit and with Rasûlullâh ﷺ naming you as, 'The Trustworthy One?' I make you my witness that I have given my life to the Path of Allâh and will never oppose you, nor will I ever accept a command post again.

The Muslims loved these words and so Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ said, "Join your brothers, Abû Sulaymân. May Allâh have mercy upon you."

Khâlid ﷺ sprang up like a lion and went to his equipment.

His put on the armour of Musaylamah al-Khaththâb, which he had taken from him at the Battle of Yamâmah, and put on a helmet followed by a cap.

He then tied his sword-belt and practically flowed into his saddle like the flowing of a stream and called out to the advance forces, "Come forth and wield your swords."

They hastily responded and came like flying eagles in obedience to the Most Merciful Allâh. Khâlid ﷺ took the flag and began waving it with his troops rotating around him.

The Muslims began making salâm to each other and then the troop departed with Abdullâh bin Unays ﷺ as a guide.

10) Help arrives

Râfi' bin 'Umayrah narrates:

I was that day amongst the troops of Khâlid bin al-Walîd, may Allâh be pleased with him. We pressed hard in our journey until Allâh folded up for us the lengthy distance. Close to sunset, we saw the Romans like spread-out locusts drowning the Muslims with their great numbers. Khâlid called out, "O Ibn Unays, where will I find the cousin of Rasûlullâh ﷺ?"

Ibn Unays ؓ replied, "He took a pledge with his men to either meet at the monk's monastery or in Paradise."

Khâlid ؓ looked towards the monastery and saw the Islâmic flag which was in the hands of Ibn Ja'far ؓ. Every single Muslim was wounded and had given up on the temporary life and was looking forward to the Eternal Life. The Romans were clashing with them inflicting many sword-strikes and spear-stabs upon the Muslims. Ibn Ja'far ؓ was calling out, "Get the Disbelievers! Be patient in fighting the astray ones. Know that the Most Merciful of those who show mercy has already shown (victory) to you."

كَم مِّن فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً

بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ مَعَ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ

How often a small group overcame a mighty force by Allâh's leave? And Allâh is with the patient ones. [2:249]

Khâlid ؓ saw their patience and firmness in fighting their enemy and could not stop himself from launching an assault. Waving his flag he called out to his men, "Get this ugly nation and water your swords with their blood. O people, receive glad tidings of salvation. Come to success."

While Ibn Ja'far ؓ and his companions found themselves in their terrible predicament, the horses of the Muslims appeared. They came like birds upon which there were men or rather like clawing eagles and savage lions covered in iron. The lions roared and the eagles shrieked. When the entrapped Muslims saw the horses coming, they thought that they were Romans who were hiding and had now come out

against them. They were certain that their destruction was coming and became frightened. They took matters hard and lost patience.

The Disbelievers inflicted destruction and fell upon the Muslims like a burning war. Swords glittered, heads rolled and the ground was covered with corpses. The Muslims were completely in the grip of the enemy and the sword was doing its work upon the men when a voice was heard calling out, "The safe one is abandoned and the fearing one is helped. O bearers of the Qurân, help has reached you from the Most Merciful. We help you against the worshippers of the cross."

Ibn Ja'far's ﷺ men had their hearts in their throats at that time. Suddenly a horseman came at the front of the advancing cavalry as if he was a raging lion with a shaft of moonlight in his hand. He shouted out loud, "Glad tidings of firm help, O bearers of the Qurân! I am Khâlid bin al-Walîd."

When the Muslims saw the flag and heard Khâlid's ﷺ voice, it was as if they were being pulled out of the deep sea after drowning. They responded with voices filled with thunder and storm, "Lâ ilâha illallâh" and "Allâhu Akbar!"

Khâlid ﷺ then attacked with his troops who never separated from him and began slashing the Romans with his sword.

'Âmir bin Surâqah narrates:

Nothing resembled his attack except the attack of a lion against sheep.

Each Christian tried to defend himself while Khâlid ﷺ tried to reach 'Abdullâh bin Ja'far ﷺ. The Muslims did not know who were on the advancing horses until they heard the voice of Khâlid ﷺ calling out, "O people, get the enemy. Help has come to you from the Rabb of Heaven." Then he attacked with the Muslims.

11) Dirar's ﷺ exploits

Wâthilah bin al-Asqa'ﷺ narrates:

We had lost hope of living and were sure that we would be destroyed until Allâh's aid reached us. So we attacked with our brothers. Before darkness set in, we saw Khâlid with the flag in his hand shoving the Christians aside just like a shepherd moves his sheep. The Muslims were killing and capturing the Romans, but praise be to Allah - how amazing Abû Tharr al-Ghifârî ﷺ and Dirâr Ibn al-Azwar ﷺ were!

They advanced slowly forward as if they were on some parade, waving their swords and killing Romans in every direction. Dirâr ﷺ met up with Ibn Ja'far ﷺ. He saw that his armour's sleeve was covered with blood like a camel's liver and said, "Thanks be to Allâh for saving you, O cousin of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. By Allâh! You have avenged your father and have quenched your thirst for revenge."

Ibn Ja'far ﷺ : Who is speaking to me?

He did not recognise Dirâr due to the intense dark of the night and also because Dirâr had his entire face covered except for the eyes.

Dirâr ﷺ : I am Dirâr bin al-Azwar, a Sahabî of Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

Ibn Ja'far ﷺ : O brother, your help is most welcome.

'Abdullâh bin Unays ﷺ reports:

While Ibn Ja'far ﷺ and Dirâr ﷺ were talking, Khâlid ﷺ came with his army and said, "Allâh be thanked for you and may He grant you an excellent reward."

Ibn Ja'far ﷺ turned to Dirâr ﷺ and said, "O Dirâr, there is a Roman force and patricians at the monastery protecting the daughter of the governor of Tripoli. She has great wealth with her, but a Roman cavalry guards her. Will you join me in an attack?"

Dirâr ﷺ : Where are they?

Ibn Ja'far ﷺ : Do you not see them?

He motioned with his eyes at a Roman force. The soldiers and the patrician from Tripoli surrounded the monastery to protect the girl. They had lit fires in which the light of the crosses glittered as if they were fires themselves. They resembled a wall made of iron.

Dirâr ﷺ : May Allâh keep guiding you towards good. What a good guide you are. I will certainly join your attack.

He took his men with them, who shouted at the Romans and attacked from different directions. The guards defended themselves, the most fierce being the patrician. He went in front of the people and yelled like a camel and a lion, shouting his words of disbelief, attacking most daringly. Dirâr ﷺ aimed at him and the two opponents clashed. Dirâr ﷺ examined him and found him to be heavy-built and sitting firmly in

his saddle. He struck very hard and guarded himself well. Both became more cautious of the other, but each one desperate to get at the other.

Dirâr ended up alone with the patrician with no Muslim nearby. He went further out to ensnare the enemy and so the patrician and his men came after him to attack him. He was searching for a place where his horse could manoeuvre when suddenly someone came at him from the darkness of the night. His horse stumbled and he fell to the ground. He sprang up to grab the horse but could not find a way to do that, so he stood facing the enemy with his sword and shield in hand. He started fighting the enemy and persevered like noble ones persevere so that nobody could censure him with regard to his duty to Allâh. The patrician wanted to hit him with a pole. When he struck out, Dirâr avoided it and then sprang at him like a lion and struck such a blow at the horse that unsettled it. He then stood and clenched his fist to hit it a second time right in its eye.

The horse fell to the ground and the Christian fell down on his back and could not get up because he was stuck in the saddle. So Dirâr went to deal with him before his men arrived and struck him on his shoulder tendon, but the sword bounced off without effect. The Christian resisted, so Dirâr seized him and found him to be like a great mountain. He pressed his chest and sat on his throat. He had a knife which was made in Yaman which he always kept with him. He took it out of the scabbard and began cutting the enemy of Allâh from his chest to his navel until he fell down dead and Allâh sped his soul to Hell. Dirâr then got up and sat on the horse of Allâh's enemy. It had on it much gold, silver and gems worth a large amount. He attacked, shouting, "Allâhu Akbar!" and scattered them left and right.

12) The booty

In the meantime Ibn Ja'far captured the monastery and all those within it. The Muslims surrounded the monastery, but did not seize anything awaiting Khâlid's return from pursuing the enemy. He pursued them until they reached a great river which separated them from Tripoli. The Romans knew its crossings and crossed over leaving Khâlid stranded. He returned to the Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and found that they had occupied the monastery and killed the patrician. They were spread out gathering the booty and all the goods, carpets, fabric, clothing, food etc. which they found in the market.

Wâthilah bin al-Asqa'ﷺ reports:

We gathered the booty and ate the good food and took out of the monastery the gold and silver vessels, curtains, seats, wealth and the daughter of the patrician who had with her forty slave-girls all wearing costly dresses and jewellery. We loaded these on Turkish horses, mules and donkeys and returned with great wealth and booty.

It is narrated that the success of this expedition was attributed to three men: 'Abdullâh bin Ja'far ﷺ, the commander; 'Abdullâh bin Unays ﷺ, who brought the reinforcements and Khâlid bin al-Walîd ﷺ, who saved the day. Khâlid ﷺ had undergone great difficulties and had sustained painful wounds.

As they were leaving, Khâlid ﷺ went to the monastery and called out to the monk, "O monk." He received no reply and so called out a second time and threatened him, so he came to him.

Monk : What do you want? I take oath in the name of Christ that the Master of Heaven will retaliate against you for the blood of those whom you have slain.

Khâlid ﷺ : How can He retaliate against us when He Himself has commanded us to fight you and wage Jihâd against you and has in fact promised us reward for doing so? By Allâh! Had Rasûlullâh ﷺ not forbidden us, I would not leave you in your monastery, but would kill you in a most evil manner.

The monk kept quiet and did not reply.

Khâlid ﷺ and the Muslims returned with the booty to Damascus. There Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ thanked them and made salâm to Ibn Ja'far ﷺ and Khalid ﷺ. He returned to his quarters where he took the state's one-fifth share out of the booty and divided the rest amongst the Muslims. To Dirâr ﷺ he gave the patrician's horse with the saddle and whatever else was on it such as gold and silver jewellery, jewels and gems. Dirâr ﷺ took it to his sister, the lady Khawlah, who took the gems out and distributed them amongst the Muslim women, with a single gem being worth quite a sum.

The captives, including the patrician's daughter, were brought in front of Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ.

Ibn Ja'far ﷺ : I want her.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : I will have to ask 'Umar for permission.

He wrote to 'Umar ﷺ who wrote back, "She is for him." Ibn Ja'far ﷺ took his new slave-girl. She remained with him for a long time and was an expert cook who specialised in Persian and Roman cuisine. She remained with him until the reign of Yazîd who, upon hearing of her, requested to receive her as a gift. Ibn Ja'far ﷺ gave her to him where she remained.

'Âmir bin Rabî'ah narrates:

I received from the booty of the monastery's market, brocade with Roman pictures thereon. Every cloth had a beautiful picture of Îsâ and Maryam ﷺ. I took the brocade to Yaman where I sold some for a great price. 'Umar ﷺ wrote to me while I was with Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "O my nephew, send many of these brocades to me so that they can be spent (on the poor)."

13) Drinking wine

It is narrated that when the Muslims returned with the booty, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ wrote to 'Umar ﷺ to inform him of the victory and booty of Abû al-Quds. He praised, commended and thanked Khâlid ﷺ and reported what he had said (when he left for the expedition). He also requested the Khalîfah to write to Khâlid ﷺ to obtain his opinion on attacking either Heraclius or Baytul Muqaddas and informed him that some Muslims had taken to drinking wine.

'Âsim bin Thu-yab al-'Âmirî who had participated in the conquest of Damascus narrates:

Some of the Yamanî bedouins had taken to drinking wine and considered it to be good. The commander, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ opposed this. One of the bedouins, I think it was Surâqah bin 'Âmir, said, "O Muslims, abandon wine, for it destroys the senses and earns sins. Rasûlullâh ﷺ has not only cursed the drinker of wine, but even the transporter and the one to whom it is carried."

Usâmah bin Zayd al-Laythî narrates fom az-Zuhrî who narrates from Humayd bin 'Abdirahmân bin 'Awf al-Ghifâri:

I was with Abû 'Ubaydah in Syria. He wrote to 'Umar ﷺ to inform him of the conquest of Syria and also wrote, "The Muslims are drinking wine and trifle with the prescribed punishment."

I arrived in al-Madînah and found 'Umar ﷺ sitting in the Masjid of Rasûlullâh ﷺ with some Sahâbah ﷺ who were speaking amongst themselves. Amongst them were 'Uthmân, 'Alî and 'Abdurahmân bin 'Awf. I handed the letter over to 'Umar ﷺ. He read it, started thinking for a while and then said, "Verily Rasûlullâh ﷺ lashed the drinker of wine."

Then he asked 'Alî ﷺ, "What is your opinion on that?"

'Alî ﷺ said, "When the drinker becomes drunk, he becomes delirious and when he becomes delirious he makes things up."

('Alî ﷺ meant that although the exact punishment for drinking wine had not been specified by Rasûlullâh ﷺ, its punishment should at least equal that of slander, i.e. eighty lashes especially since the drunkard is apt to slander - translator's note.)

So 'Umar ﷺ wrote to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "Whoever drinks wine should be lashed eighty times. I swear that severity and poverty will be good for them. Their duty is to fear Allâh, to worship Him, to believe in Him and be grateful unto Him. Inflict the prescribed punishment on whoever has returned to drinking."

When 'Umar's ﷺ letter arrived, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had it announced, "Whoever is liable for punishment for drinking wine should present themselves for lashing and repent unto Allâh."

Many came forward and were lashed.

14) March against Hims and Antioch

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ said, "I have resolved to go to Antioch and strike at the heart of the Roman Empire. Perhaps Allâh will grant us victory." The Muslims said, "Go wherever you please, for we will follow you and fight your enemies." He rejoiced at their words and said, "Prepare to travel. I am taking you to Aleppo and after conquering it, we will go to Antioch."

The Muslims hastened in their preparations. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ finished all his tasks and ordered Khâlid ﷺ to the front of the army. He was to lead the vanguard bearing the Flag of the Eagle which Abû Bakr ﷺ had tied. Khâlid ﷺ went with the vanguard and took Dirâr ﷺ, Râfi' bin 'Umayrah and Musayyib bin Najîyah al-Fazârî with him. They were followed by others. 500 men under Safwân bin 'Âmir as-Sulamî were left at Damascus while Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ left with the Muslims, including the Yamanis and tribes of Mudar.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ took the road to al-Baqâ' and al-Labûwah. Upon reaching there, he despatched Khâlid ﷺ to Hims, saying, "O Abû Sulayman, go with the blessings and help of Allâh. Descend upon the people and attack al-'Awasim and Qinsarîn while I go to Ba'labakk. Perhaps Allâh will make matters easy for us and we will be victorious." He then bade him farewell.

Khâlid ﷺ went with his men to Hims, while Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ headed towards Ba'labakk. The patrician of Jûsîyah arrived with many gifts and proposed a one-year truce with the Muslims and said, "If you conquer Ba'labakk then I present myself to you and will not oppose a single word of yours."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ agreed to his terms demanding 4,000 dirham and 500 robes of brocade.

15) The story of Jabalah bin al-Ayham

After concluding the treaty, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ headed for Ba'labakk and had not covered much distance from al-Labûwah when a noble horseman appeared. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ recognised him to be Usâmah bin Zayd at-Tâî and so he called out, "O Usâmah, from where do you come?"

Usâmah : From al-Madînah.

He then handed over a letter from 'Umar ﷺ. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ opened it. It read as follows :

> *Lâ ilâha illallâh Muhammad Rasûlullâh.*
>
> *In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*
>
> *From : The slave of Allâh, 'Umar, the Commander of the Believers.*
>
> *To : The Trustworthy One of the Ummah*
>
> *Salâm 'Alayka*
>
> *I praise Allâh besides whom there is no other deity and convey salutations upon his Prophet Muhammad.*

There is no averting predestination and what Allâh has decreed. He who has been written down as a disbeliever on the Preserved Tablet (in Heaven) will not get Faith. In this light Jabalah bin al-Ayham al-Ghassânî came to us with his cousins and chiefs of his people. We extended our hospitality to them and were good to them. They embraced Islâm at my hands and I was pleased that Allâh would strengthen Islâm and the Muslims with them, but I did not have knowledge of the future. We went to Makkah - may Allah Most High protect her and preserve her greatness - to perform the Hajj. Jabalah was circling the Ka'bah when a man of Fazârah tramped on his cloth which fell off him. He turned to the Fazârî and said, "Be destroyed! You have exposed me in Allâh's Sacred Masjid." The Fazârî said, "By Allâh! It was not deliberate." Jabalah bin al-Ayham struck him so hard that his nose and all four incisors broke.

The Fazârî came to me for assistance against Jabalah, so I summoned him and said to him, "What made you strike your Muslim brother, breaking his nose and four incisors?" Jabalah said, "He tramped on my cloth which became loose. By Allâh! Were it not for the sacredness of the Ka'bah I would have killed him." I said, "You have confessed against yourself. So either he forgives you or retaliates against you." Jabalah retorted, "He will take retaliation from me when I am a king and he is a worthless commoner?" I replied, "You are both equal in Islâm. You have no superiority over him except if you are more pious." Jabalah requested to be given a chance until the next day, so I asked the Fazârî, "Will you leave him until tomorrow?"

He agreed, but during the night Jabalah and his cousins mounted their horses and fled to the dog of the sinners in Syria (Heraclius). I hope that Allâh will bring him into your hands.

> *Invade Hims and go no further. If they offer to surrender, then accept, otherwise fight them. Send a spy to Antioch and be on your guard against the Christian 'Arabs.*
>
> *Peace, Allah's mercy and blessings be upon you and all the Muslims.*

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ read the letter once softly and then again publicly and then turned to Hims. Khâlid ﷺ preceded him with a third of the army and reached Hims on a Friday of Shawwâl 14 Hijrî.

16) Khâlid's ﷺ raid

Heraclius's governor, Lacita had died just before the arrival of Khâlid ﷺ and the Muslims. The Christians therefore gathered in their great cathedral where their elder said, "Caesar's governor has died and he does not know about the arrival of these 'Arabs. They have now invaded us as we thought they would, but we expected them to only invade us after conquering Jûsîyah and Ba'labakk. Even if you write to Caesar to send us a new governor with an army, the 'Arabs will never let any army come to you let alone actually arrive here. Also, you do not have enough food to survive a siege."

Christians : What should we do, sir?

Elder : Seek terms with them and agree to whatever they demand and say to them, "We will surrender to you if you conquer Qinsarîn and Aleppo and defeat Caesar's army." Then when they turn away from us we will request Caesar to send us a huge army and governor of his choice and supply us with food and equipment. Thereafter we can fight them.

They approved of this plan and said, "Your opinion and plan is excellent. We will act upon that."

The patrician sent a highly respected priest to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ to conclude a truce with him. The priest spoke to him as instructed by the patrician, that is, that the Muslims should depart for Aleppo, al-'Awâsim and Antioch. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ agreed upon receiving a payment of 10,000 Dînâr and 200 robes of brocade and concluded a one-year cease-fire commencing from Thul-Qa'dah until the next Shawwâl 15 Hijrî. After the treaty was concluded, the traders came out to buy and sell with the Muslims. They found the 'Arabs to be generous and earned much profit.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ called Khâlid ؓ. Giving him a squadron of 4,000 cavalry of Lakhm, Juthâm, Tayy, Nabhân, Kahlân, Kindah and Khawlân, he said, "O Abû Sulayman! Take this squadron on raiding expeditions and seek out their leaders, especially those of Aleppo. Attack the lands of al-'Awâsim and then return. Send your spy forward to see if they have anyone special in charge of the defence or not."

Khâlid ؓ took the flag and recited the following poem in front of his squadron :

أخذتها والملك العظيم   وإنني بحملها زعيم
لأنني كبش بني مخزوم   وصاحب لأحمد الكريم
أسير مثل الأسد الغشوم   يا رب فارزقني قتال الروم

I swear by the Great King that I have taken this banner
And that by carrying it I am the leader.
Because I am the chief of Makhzûm's sons,
And also am amongst Noble Ahmad's companions.
In setting out it is like a reckless lion that I behave
O Allâh! It is fighting the Romans that I do crave.

Khâlid ؓ continued until he came to Shayzar and halted at the river-bend. He called Musab bin Muhârib al-Yashkurî, gave him 500 horsemen and ordered him to raid al-'Awâsim and Qinsarîn. Khalid ؓ went forth to Kafr Tâb, al-Marâh and Dayr Sam'ân. They raided the countryside and villages in all directions seizing booty and captives which they brought to Khâlid ؓ who returned with them to Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ. He was very pleased to see all that he had brought.

17) Conquest by kindness

A mass of people began arriving afterwards, reciting, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" and salutations upon Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : Who are they, O Abû Sulaymân?

Khalid ؓ : This is Musab bin Muhârib al-Yashkurî. I had given him command over 500 horsemen of his tribe and the Yamanîs. They raided al-'Awâsim and Qinsarîn and have now brought booty, captives and wealth.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ turned to them and saw the great herd of cattle and flock of sheep and Turkish horses mounted by men, women and children. They were noisy with their wailing. Abû 'Ubaydah went to them and saw that the men were tied up and weeping over their families, looted wealth, and destroyed homes. He said to the translator, "Say to them - why do you weep? Why do you not embrace Islâm. Why did you not seek agreements of safety for your lives and wealth?"

The translator said this to them and they (numbering about 400) replied, "O commander, we were very far from you. Although your news reached us, we did not think that you would reach us. We had no further knowledge until your men came and looted our wealth and children and dragged us away in these ropes as you can see."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : We will be kind to you and free you. We will return your wealth and families. Will you then accept our rule and pay Jizyah and land-tax?

Captives : If you do this, we will obey whatever conditions you impose.

He turned to the Muslims and said, "I feel that they should be granted safety and that their wealth and families be returned unto them. They will remain inhabiting their towns and lands as our subjects and pay us Jizyah and land-tax. What is your opinion, for I do not decide any matter without consulting you."

Muslims : Your opinion is good for the Muslims, O commander.

A fine of four dînârs was imposed on each captive and 'Umar ﷺ was informed about it. Their wealth and children were returned to them and they were left to stay in their lands. A document was compiled, listing their names and he ordered them to return to their lands. When they returned they informed their neighbours of the good nature of the 'Arabs and of the good treatment they had received from them and said, "We thought that they would kill us and enslave our children, but they had mercy upon us and let us stay in our homes upon payment of Jizyah and land-tax." In that manner other Romans came to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ seeking safety from the Muslims upon payment of the Jizyah and land-tax.

18) Luke's plan

The people of Qinsarîn heard that Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ granted an agreement of safety to whoever sought it from him. They all agreed to request his safety and to quietly send an envoy without their governor knowing about it.

Luke, the governor of Qinsarîn and al-'Awasim, was amongst the fierce warrior patricians. The people of Qinsarîn were terrified of him. He was equal to the ruler of Aleppo in strength and armies. Heraclius had summoned both, but they replied, "O Caesar, we cannot abandon our lands without a violent fight." Heraclius appreciated this and promised to send them a massive army upon which they were now waiting. Each already had a cavalry of 10,000 men, except that the two cavalries were not gathered at a single place.

When Luke discovered the people's intention of surrendering, he became intensely furious. He devised a scheme against them and summoned them.

Luke : O Romans, what should I do with these 'Arabs who are almost upon you? They are heading towards us, conquering our region just as they have already conquered most of Syria.

Romans : O Sir, we have heard that they are extremely trustworthy and fulfil their agreements. Most of the land has surrendered to them due to their justice. Whoever fought against them was defeated and their wives and children enslaved. However, whoever surrendered was allowed to stay safe in their lands, safe from their power. We wish to surrender to save our lives and wealth.

Luke : You have rendered the correct and blameless opinion, for these 'Arabs are victorious against whomsoever fights against them, but in the meantime I will seek a one-year cease-fire with them and then when they are complacent, we will get reinforcements from Caesar Heraclius and wipe them out to the last man.

Romans : Do what is for the best.

They agreed to the truce he proposed, but in everyone's heart there was deception. Luke then summoned the priest, Stacher, who was a scholar of both Christianity and Judaism. He was fluent, strong-hearted and knew both Arabic and Greek. Luke said to him, "O Father, go to the 'Arabs and ask them for a one-year truce so we can deceive the people."

He then wrote a letter to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and began the letter with his words of Disbelief:

> *O 'Arabs! Our city is heavily fortified and has abundant supplies and manpower. Were you to come against us you would not be able to overcome us even in 100 years. Caesar Heraclius is collecting reinforcements against you from as far as Great*

> *Rûmîyah and the Gulf. We are sending an envoy to you to make a one-year truce with you so that we can see in whose hands the land falls. We also desire that border markings be established between you and us, marking off the border of Qinsarîn and al-'Awâsim so that when the 'Arabs go on their raids, our lands will be clearly marked off. We offer this truce in secret, for if Heraclius were to find out he would kill us. (Greetings).*

Then he gave the priest a resplendant robe, a mule from amongst his steeds and ten boys.

19) The truce

The priest went to Hims. There he saw Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ leading the Muslims in Salâtul 'Asr. He stood and stared, amazed at the sight. After the completion of the Salâh, the Muslims saw him and so they rushed to him and asked, "Who are you? Where do you come from?"

He replied, "I am a messenger with a letter."

They took him to Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ, whom he wanted to bow down to, but Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ forbade him and said, "We are the slaves of Allâh, Most Honourable and Majestic. Some will be fortunate and some wretched."

فَأَمَّا ٱلَّذِينَ شَقُوا۟ فَفِى ٱلنَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَشَهِيقٌ

خَٰلِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتُ وَٱلْأَرْضُ

As for those who are wretched, they will be in the Fire, sighing in a high and low tone. They will dwell therein for as long as the Heavens and Earth endure. [11:106-7]

The priest was astounded and could give no reply, astonished at what Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ had said. Khâlid ؓ called out to him, "What do you want and whose messenger are you?"

Priest : Are you the commander?

Khâlid ﷺ *(pointing at Abû 'Ubaydah)* : No, he is.

Priest : I am the messenger of the governor of Qinsarîn and al-'Awâsim.

He took out the letter and handed it over to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who read it out to the Muslims.

When Khâlid ﷺ heard the description of the city, the quantity of their supplies and men, and their threat of Heraclius's reinforcements, he shook his head and said to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "By Him who helps us and made us from amongst the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ, the pure one, this letter is from such a man who does not desire peace, but war."

Turning to the priest, he said, "Your people wish to deceive us until your master's armies arrive. As soon as you see them arriving, you will repudiate the treaty and will be the first to fight us. Then if you see us victorious, you will run away to that despot, Heraclius. If you really intend to make a truce, then we promise you a one-year truce. If any army comes to you during the truce, we will fight it. However, whoever remains in the city and does not come out to fight with the army will be considered to be at peace with us and we will not interfere with him."

Priest : We accept. Please put it in writing for us.

After Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ wrote out the document, the priest said, "O commander, our land borders that of the prince of Aleppo. We wish for markings to be set up so that when your men go on raids they will not trespass our lands."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was pleased and said, "I will send men to mark off the border for you."

Priest : We do not need any of you. We will manufacture a pillar with the statue of Heraclius thereon and erect it. When your men see it they should not trespass.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Do that.

He handed over the document and announced to the Muslims, "Whoever sees the pillars should not trespass, but should only confine his raids to the territory of Aleppo. Whoever has heard this announcement should inform any absentees."

The priest returned to Luke and, telling him what transpired, handed him the document. Luke rejoiced and planned to erect a huge pillar with a statue of Caesar Heraclius sitting on his Imperial throne on it.

The Muslim horsemen would raid to the farthest extents of Aleppo, al-'Amq and Antioch, but would desist from the borders of Qinsarîn and al-'Awâsim.

'Umar bin 'Abdillâh narrates from Sâlim bin Qays who narrates from his ancestor, Sa'd bin 'Ubadah ﷺ:

The Muslims agreed to the truce with the people of Qinsarîn and al-'Awâsim upon receiving payment of 4,000 Imperial dînâr, 100 Ûqiyah (12.2 kg) of silver, 1,000 robes of Aleppo and 1,000 Wasaq (192.7 t) of food.

20) The statue

'Âmir narrates:

We were out raiding when we saw the pillar with Caesar Heraclius's statue thereon. We circled the pillar with our horses going back and forth to inspect it. Abû Jandalah was carrying a long spear in his hand with which he pierced the statue's eyes when his horse suddenly trotted forward without his command. There were some Romans at the statue. They were the slaves of the governor of Qinsarîn sent to guard the pillar. They returned and informed him. He was enraged. He presented a golden cross to one of his men, putting him in charge of 1,000 Christian horsemen who wore Roman brocade and sword-belts. Then ordering Stacher to go with them, he said, "Tell the commander of the 'Arabs - You have betrayed us and have not fulfilled your duty unto us. He who betrays will be brought to the ground."

The priest took the cross and went to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. When the Muslims saw the raised cross they rushed to him and lowered the cross. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ then came out and asked, "Who are you?"

Priest : I am Qinsarîn's governor's messenger to you. He says that you have been treacherous and broken the treaty between us.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : How have we broken it?

Priest : By piercing the eyes of Caesar's statue.

Abû 'Ubaydah ✽ : I swear that I know nothing of that. O Muslims, whoever pierced the statue's eyes should inform us.

Muslims : O commander, Abû Jandalah and Sahl bin 'Amr did it accidently.

Abû 'Ubaydah ✽ : They did it unintentionally. What will now satisfy you against us?

Christians : We will not be satisfied until we have gouged out the eyes of your king.

Abû 'Ubaydah ✽ : I present myself. Do unto me as was done to your statue.

Christians : No! We want your great king who rules all the 'Arabs.

Abû 'Ubaydah ✽ : The Khalîfah's eye will be safe from that.

The Muslims were furious at what the Christians said regarding 'Umar's ✽ eye and would have killed them had Abû 'Ubaydah ✽ not prevented them. They said, "O commander! We are under our leader and will willingly sacrifice ourselves for him. We will take out our eyes in place of his."

Priest : Do not pierce 'Umar's eyes, nor yours. Instead, we will make a statue of the commander on the pillar and do to it as you did to our Caesar's picture.

Muslims : We did it unintentionally while you are doing this intentionally.

Abû 'Ubaydah ✽ : Restrain yourselves. If they will be satisfied with merely my image then you have already accepted (greater than that). Let them not say that we had an agreement with them and then betrayed them. These are a people without integrity or intelligence.

He accepted their proposal so they made a statue of Abû 'Ubaydah ✽ with glass eyes. They placed it on the pillar. One of their horsemen angrily came and pierced it. The priest then returned to inform Luke who addressed his people, "These people get what they want in this manner."

21) 'Umar's ✽ letter

Abû 'Ubaydah ✽ continued raiding in all directions from Hims awaiting the expiry of the cease-fire. He delayed in sending any information to 'Umar ✽ who received neither letter nor news on any conquests. 'Umar ✽ was displeased and began to suspect that he was becoming lax in Jihâd, so he wrote the following letter to him:

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

From : The slave of Allâh, 'Umar bin al-Khattab, the Commander of the Believers

To : The Trustworthy One of the Ummah, Abû 'Ubaydah 'Âmir bin al-Jarrâh

Salâm 'alayk

I praise Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity and convey salutations upon His Prophet Muhammad. I order you to fear Allâh in both secret and open. I warn you against sinning against Allâh Who is Most Honourable and Magnificent. I warn you and absolutely forbid you from being amongst those about whom Allâh has stated :

قُلْ إِن كَانَ ءَابَآؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَآؤُكُمْ

وَإِخْوَٰنُكُمْ وَأَزْوَٰجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ ....

Say: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your kindred, the wealth that you have gained, the commerce in which you fear a decline and the dwellings in which you delight are dearer to you than Allâh and His Messenger and Jihâd in His Path, then wait until Allâh brings about His decision (of punishment). And Allâh guides not the disobedient ones. [9:24]

Salutations be upon the Seal of all Prophets and Leader of all the Messengers. All praise belongs to Allâh, the Rabb of all the worlds.

Upon receiving the letter, Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ read it out to the Muslims who realised that 'Umar ؓ was encouraging them to go and fight. Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ regretted making the truce with Qinsarîn and every single Muslim wept on hearing the contents of the letter and said, "O commander, what prevents you from waging Jihâd? Leave the people of Shayzar* and Qinsarîn and take us against Aleppo and Antioch. Perhaps Allâh will conquer them through us. The truce is nearly over, only a short while remains. Nothing remains forever except the Lofty King.

*(*An error has occured in this narration. The truce was with al-'Awâsim, not Shayzar - translator's note.)*

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ resolved to go against Aleppo. He tied one flag for Sahl bin 'Amr and another for Mus'ab bin Muhârib al-Yashkurî and ordered 'Iyâd bin Ghânim to lead the vanguard, followed by Khâlid ؓ. Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ advanced until he reached ar-Rashîn, which surrendered. Arriving at Hamâh, he saw the population coming out. The priests led them while the monks raised the Bible aloft. He asked them, "What do you want?" They replied, "We wish to surrender and live under your rule and protection for you people are most beloved unto us."

He wrote out the document and left his representatives behind.

Upon reaching Shayzar, the people welcomed him and surrendered.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : Have you heard any news of the despot Heraclius?

Shayzarîs : We have only heard that the governor of Qinsarîn has written to him for reinforcements. So he sent Jabalah bin al-Ayham al-Ghassânî and the Christian 'Arabs together with the governor of Amorium commanding 10,000 cavalry. They are now at the Iron Bridge, so beware, O commander.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : Allâh suffices us and is the best disposer of affairs.

He remained at Shayzar, sometimes thinking of attacking Aleppo and sometimes Antioch. He gathered the Muslim generals and said, "O people, I have been informed that the governor of Qinsarîn has broken the treaty by sending for reinforcements from Heraclius. Heraclius has sent Jabalah bin al-Ayham with the Christian 'Arabs and the governor of Amorium with 10,000 cavalry. They are now at the Iron Bridge. What do you say in this matter?"

Generals : O commander, leave Qinsarîn and al-'Awâsim and take us to Aleppo and Antioch.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Then get your gear. May Allâh have mercy on you.

Less than a month remained for the truce between the Muslims and Qinsarîn to expire, so Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ waited for the expiry eagerly.

22) Slaves and firewood

It was discovered that the 'Arabs' slaves were cutting olive-, pomegranate- and other fruit-bearing trees. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ became angry and asked them, "What is this wickedness?"

Slaves : O commander, the firewood trees are far off while these are near.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : I resolve to punish whoever cuts a fruit-bearing tree, whether he is a freeman or slave.

Thereafter they would fetch firewood from far off places.

Sa'îd bin 'Âmir ﷺ narrates:

I had with me an excellent slave called Muhji' who had participated with me in all the battles. He was brave-hearted and when he went on a raid or in search of firewood he would go far out.

One day he went in search of firewood with such slaves who had participated in the battles. For a long time I had no news of him, so I mounted my horse to go in search of him. Suddenly I came across the man with blood flowing down his face, soaking his entire body. He was hardly able to take a single step without almost falling flat on his face.

I dismounted to go to him and said, "What has happened to you?"

He said, "Death and destruction, O my master."

I said, "Tell me what has happened, O son of a black man?"

However, he could not remain standing and fell flat on his face.

I sprinkled water on his face. He calmed down and said, "O master, save yourself before they do to you what they have done to me."

I asked him, "Who did this to you?"

He answered, “O master, I went out with a group of slaves to gather firewood. We went deep into the land when we came across a cavalry of about 1,000 horsemen, all of them ‘Arabs with gold and silver crosses around their necks and spears in their hands. When they spotted us they rushed to us and circled around us intending to kill us. I said, ‘Attack them!’ The slaves said to me, ‘Woe unto you! Who can fight when we have no power against these men and horses. We have no choice but to offer ourselves in captivity, for that is lighter than fighting.’ I said, ‘By Allâh, never! I will never hand myself over without putting up a fight.’ When they saw my resolution, they followed me and we fought the horsemen. They killed ten of us. As for me, I was covered with wounds until I fell down on my face. They left me in the state that you now see me in.”

23) Dialogue with Jabalah

Sa’îd bin ’Âmir al-Ansârî ﷺ narrates:

By Allâh! What happened to the slaves greatly depressed me. I put the slave behind me on the horse and retraced my steps when suddenly horses came from behind me like a blowing wind or like water bursting out from a tight pipe. They were horsemen of the tribe of Ghassân, carrying long spears and saying, “We are the Christian warrior-monks of Ghassân.”

I called out, “I am from amongst the Sahâbah of Muhammad ﷺ, the Chosen One.”

Some of them rushed towards me to kill me with their swords, so I shouted, “Woe unto you! Do you kill a man of your own nation?” They asked, “From which people are you?”

“From the noble tribe of al-Khazraj,” I replied.

They exclaimed, “By Christ! You are wanted by our king, Jabalah bin al-Ayham,” and withheld their swords.

I asked, “From where does Jabalah know me that he now looks for me?”

Ghassân : He seeks any Yamanî man from the Ansâr of Muhammad bin ‘Abdillâh. Come with us voluntarily or we will force you.

(The Aws and Khazraj are Yamanî in origin - translator’s note).

I went with them until I came across a huge army with raised flags and crosses. They took me to Jabalah's tent. He was wearing Roman brocade and sitting on a reddish - golden throne. On his head were netted pearls and around his neck was a cross with sapphires in it.

As I stood in front of him, he raised his head and said, "From which 'Arab nation are you?"

Sa'îd ﷺ : I am of the Yamanî people.

Jabalah : To which tribe do you belong to?

Sa'îd ﷺ : I am of the descendants of <u>H</u>ârithah bin Tha'labah bin 'Amr bin 'Âmir bin <u>H</u>ârithah bin Tha'labah bin Imra-il Qays bin 'Abdillâh bin al-Azwar bin 'Awf bin Mâlik bin Kahlân bin Saba.

Jabalah : To which branch are you connected to?

Sa'îd ﷺ : I am of al-Khazraj bin <u>H</u>ârithah and am of the An<u>s</u>âr of Mu<u>h</u>ammad bin 'Abdillâh, salutations and peace be upon him.

Jabalah : I am Jabalah bin al-Ayham who left Islâm because 'Umar bin al-Kha<u>tt</u>ab would not have someone like me as a helper for this Dîn. He wanted to punish *me* for the sake of a lowly slave whereas *I* am a Yamanî king and chief of Ghassân!

Sa'îd ﷺ : O Jabalah, verily Allâh's right takes precedence over your right. Our Dîn is not maintained except through truth and justice. When 'Umar acts in obedience to Allâh then he does not fear the words of those who blame and rebuke.

Jabalah : What is your name?

Sa'îd ﷺ : Sa'îd bin 'Âmir al-An<u>s</u>ârî.

Jabalah : Sit down, O Sa'îd.

So I (Sa'îd ﷺ) sat down.

Jabalah : Do you have any knowledge of <u>H</u>assân bin Thâbit?

Sa'îd ﷺ : He is the poet of Rasûlullâh ﷺ who said to him, "You are <u>H</u>assân and your tongue is a sword." It was not long ago that he had invited me to a gathering of his, wherein he ordered his slave-girl to recite a poem about you. Then we came out to Syria and that was the last I heard of him.

Jabalah : Will you teach me that poem?

Sa'îd ﷺ : Certainly.

Then he presented me with a Roman linen robe and said, "I have given you this linen to wear and not for you to forbid it upon yourself. In the name of 'Arab solidarity, what were you doing in that place where you were captured?"

Sa'îd ﷺ : Honesty is man's best tool. I am of Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ men. We are intending to go to Aleppo and Antioch.

Jabalah : Know that Caesar has sent me and the patrician who is the governor of Amorium to aid the governor of Qinsarîn. He has deceived you with the truce. We are waiting for him to meet us here. Return to Abû 'Ubaydah and warn him about our swords. He should return from where he came from and not interfere with Heraclius's realm for soon whatever you control of Syria will be seized from you.

24) Khâlid ﷺ goes against Luke

I mounted my horse placing my slave behind me and returned to the camp. The Muslims hurried towards me and said, "Where were you, Ibn 'Âmir?"

I went to the general's tent where I reported to him about Jabalah.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ: Allâh has saved you by means of your mentioning Hassân bin Thâbit al-Ansârî.

Then he gathered the Sahâbah ﷺ for consultation.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O people, what is your opinion on this patrician to whom we have been faithful but who has deceived us?

Khâlid ﷺ: The tyrant will be destroyed. If he deceives then Allâh is going to trap him. Soon we will scheme a scheme greater than his. I am taking ten Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ to go and meet him.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O Abû Sulaymân, you are the right man for this and every difficult task. Take whichever Sahâbah you like.

Khâlid ﷺ : Where are 'Iyâd bin Ghânim al-Ash'arî, 'Amr bin Sa'îd, Mus'ab bin Muhârib al-Yashkurî, Abû Jandalah bin Sa'îd al-Makhzûmî, Sahl bin 'Amr al-Âmirî, Râfi' bin 'Umayrah at-Tâî, al-Musayyib bin Najîyah, Sa'îd bin 'Âmir al-Ansârî,

'Amr bin Ma'dîkarab az-Zubaydî, 'Âsim bin 'Amr al-Qaysî and 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr?

They all answered, "We are at your service."

Dirâr ﷺ was absent due to an eye disease.

Khâlid ﷺ called out, "Come." and was already clad in the armour of Musaylamah al-Kaththâb which he had taken from him at the Battle of Yamâmah. He wore his battle-gear, mounted his horse and called out to his slave, Hammâm, "Come with me to see amazing things."

As they all left, Khâlid ﷺ asked, "O Sa'îd, did Jabalah tell you from where the governor of Qinsarîn will be coming?

Sa'îd ﷺ : Yes, Abû Sulaymân, he told me.

Khalid ﷺ : Take us to Jabalah's road. When the patrician comes, we will deceive him just as he deceived us and destroy him and all those with him.

Sa'îd ﷺ went in front of them to guide them. They travelled hard that night in the direction of the Christian army. When they came close to their fires and heard their voices, Sa'îd ﷺ turned in the direction of the patrician's road and hid with his companions. By dawn nobody pitched up, so Khâlid ﷺ led them in Salâtul Fajr in their place of ambush. While they were there, they saw the armies of Jabalah and the governor of Amorium heading towards al-'Awâsim and Qinsarîn.

So the Muslims said to Khâlid ﷺ, "O Abû Sulayman, do you not see that this army is equal to thorns and trees in number?"

He replied, "Their numbers will be of no avail to them when we have Allâh with us. Go and mix with them as if you are part of their army until we can get to the governor of Qinsarîn and then Allâh will do and choose as He wills."

So they mixed with the Christians, but remained together.

25) Luke captured

Râfi' bin 'Umayrah narrates:

We crossed the ceasefire line into al-'Awâsim and Qinsarîn and saw the patrician coming to welcome us (the Christian army). He came out with a cross in front of him

and priests and monks walking ahead, all close to each other, reciting from the Bible and raising their voices with their words of Disbelief.

He came to greet Jabalah and found the Sahâbah ؓ in front of him. Khâlid ؓ faced him together with the other Sahâbah ؓ around him. Not knowing who they were, he said, "Christ grant you peace. May the Cross grant you long lives!"

Khâlid ؓ retorted, "Woe unto you, we are not cross-worshippers. We are Sahâbah of Rasulullah ﷺ, Muhammad, the beloved of Allâh." He drew his sword proclaiming, "There is no deity except Allâh alone. I am Khâlid bin al-Walîd. I am the Makhzûmî Sahâbî of Rasulullah ﷺ."

He then hit the patrician and pulled him out of his saddle.

The Sahâbah ؓ advanced, drawing their swords against his men. A tumult was raised. The Christians called out their words of Disbelief and the Muslims proclaimed the Oneness of Allâh. Jabalah and the patrician of Amorium heard the Muslims calling out, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" and felt uneasy. The Christians saw the naked swords and pointed spears and so rushed to surround the Muslims from all sides. Khâlid ؓ examined the situation that had befallen him and his men. Luke was still being held prisoner, and Khalid feared that he would escape or start fighting anew before he had a chance to kill him. He therefore raised his sword to kill him, but saw him smiling.

Khâlid ؓ : Woe unto you! What makes you laugh?

Luke : You and your men are already dead but you still think of killing me. If you spare me it will be better for you.

So Khâlid ؓ spared him and shouted, "O Sahâbah of Rasulullah ﷺ, surround me to defend me. Be patient at what befalls us. Do not be awed by the numbers that surround you, for the worst that they can do to you is kill you. Death in the Path of Allâh is in fact Khâlid's desire. By Allâh! I have presented my life over and over again hoping to be blessed with martyrdom. May Allâh have mercy upon you. Know that our proof is clear and leads to Allâh as if we have already reached the Rabb and live in an abode whose inhabitants do not die."

لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَمَا هُم مِّنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ

Tiredness touches them not therein and nor are they expelled there from. [15:48]

The Sahâbah encircled him. 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr was on his right, Rafi' bin 'Umayrah on his left, his slave, Hammân behind him and the rest forming an outer circle. He handed Luke over to Hammân and said to him, "Keep him at your side and do not leave your place. Receive glad tidings of Help from Allâh, the Most Honourable and Magnificent."

The Christian 'Arabs then advanced against the Muslims. Jabalah, wearing a cross around his neck, led them. The cross was golden and attached to a jewelled chain. He wore chain-mail above a robe of embroidered brocade and a gold helmet topped with a jewelled cross. He was carrying a long spear, the tip of which shone like a candle. The governor of Amorium came like a solid tower surrounded by the Christians of Mudlijah and they surrounded the Muslims. When he saw that Khâlid had captured Luke, he feared that Khâlid might kill him, so he said to Jabalah, "By Christ! These 'Arabs are all devils. Do you not see that that 'Arab has only about ten men and is completely surrounded by our army yet they are not concerned in any way. They have our man captured and he cannot escape. I fear that they will kill him whereas Heraclius Caesar greatly venerates him. So go to him and tell him that he should free Luke and hand him over to us in exchange for their lives. However, once they have handed him over we will attack them and kill them to the last man."

26) Khâlid and Jabalah

Râfi' bin 'Umayrah narrates:

We were surrounding Khâlid and were in turn surrounded by the Romans and Christian 'Arabs. Their numbers did not concern us because we placed our reliance upon Allâh. Jabalah appeared, calling out in a loud voice, "Who amongst you are of the well-known Sahabah of Muhammad and who amongst you are from the subservient 'Arabs? Tell us before we destroy you."

Khâlid (going forward) : We are of the Sahâbah of the Chosen Muhammad known as the People of the Qiblah, Islâm, nobility and generosity. As for your question regarding our lineage, we are from various tribes. Allâh has united us on a single declaration and that is, "There is no deity but Allâh. Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh." May Allâh increase his status.

Jabalah (angry) : You *boy*! *You* are the commander of these ‘Arabs?

Khâlid ﷺ : I am not their commander, but their brother-in-Islâm and they are my Believing brothers.

Jabalah : Who are you from amongst the Sahâbah of Muhammad bin ‘Abdillâh?

Khâlid ﷺ : I am known as the ram of Banû Makhzûm. I am Khâlid bin al-Walîd, the Sahâbi of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and this man on my right is ‘Abdurahmân son of Abû Bakr as-Siddiq, may Allah be pleased with him. On my left is of the nobility of Tayy of Yaman, Rafi‘ bin ‘Umayrah, my son-in-law and heart. This is because I have chosen from every tribe their famous and brave heroes, so do not think of killing us nor become arrogant about your numbers for in battle we regard you as but little birds hiding in their nest. The hunter comes across them and casts his net upon them so that none except the distinguished one escapes.

Jabalah (growing even more angry) : Soon you will see that your words against us are mere prattle when our spear-points are rotating around you and you and your men are left as food for the beasts of this jungle who will rip you apart morning and evening.

Khâlid ﷺ: That is a mere trifle to us, nothing great. But who are you, O ‘Arab, who worships the Cross?

Jabalah : I am Chief of Banû Ghassân, a king of Hamdân, King of Ghassân and wearer of their crown. I am Jabalah bin al-Ayham.

Khâlid ﷺ : You are the one who left Islam and chose misguidance over guidance and walked the path of error and thus became misguided and astray.

Jabalah : I am not like that. Rather, I am the one who chose honour above disgrace and humiliation.

Khâlid ﷺ : You seem very eager to lower yourself, for honour is tomorrow in the Everlasting Abode far off from this wretched abode.

Jabalah : O brother of Banû Makhzûm, do not push me too far with your words. The only reason I am withholding my hand against you and your men is due to this prisoner you hold. He is close to Caesar who respects him. I fear that if I attack you, you will kill him before I can kill you. So release him then I will release you.

Khâlid ﷺ : As for my prisoner, I shall not leave him until I have killed him and I do not care what happens to me afterwards. As for you threatening us with your great numbers, it is most unjust. You are so many and we are just thirteen.

You have surrounded us with your horse's bridles, spear's points and long swords. If you want to be fair then let one horseman take on another horseman while your patrician stays here. If you kill us then he is obviously free and if Allâh grants us victory over you - for indeed victory comes only from Allâh – then you will not be concerned about the prisoner dying for you will have been killed before him.

Jabalah lowered his head and went to report Khâlid's ﷺ reply to the governor of Amorium who became intensely angry and unsheathed his sword. Khâlid ﷺ understood that he intended to launch an attack, but Jabalah stopped the governor, and made him stand underneath his cross.

Jabalah returned to Khâlid ﷺ and said, "O brother of Banû Makhzûm, your proposal appeals to justice. These Romans are sheep who do not understood the justice of duelling. I told them what you said and they have now accepted the duel, so whoever of you wants should come out and duel."

27) 'Abdurahmân ﷺ fights Jabalah

Râfi' bin 'Umayrah narrates:

Khâlid ﷺ wanted to duel, but 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr ﷺ stopped him, saying, "O Abû Sulaymân! None will go and duel them besides me. I will strive to the utmost against them. Perhaps I will meet Abû Bakr ﷺ."

Khâlid ﷺ let him go and said, "Go. May Allâh grant appreciation for your words and recognition for your actions."

He went out riding the horse which 'Umar ﷺ had received from the booty of Ajnâdayn. The horse was from the Christian 'Arabs of Banû Lakhm and Juthâm and was like a huge mountain. He was virtually drowning in iron and layered chain-mail and bore a long spear in his hand. Roving between the Roman army and Ghassânî army, he challenged them to duel him, saying, "Come and fight. I am the son of as-Siddîq." Then he recited the following poem before challenging them again to duel him:

أنا ابن عبد الله ذي المعالي	والشرف الفاضل ذي الكمالِ
أبي المجيد الصادق المقال	أدين هذا الدين بالفعال

I am the son of 'Abdullâh the one of elevation
And dignity, he was virtuous with perfection.
True in speech was my father of distinction,
I will act upon this Dîn with action.

Râfi' bin 'Umayrah narrates:

Five Roman horses came against him. In every round of attack he killed one until all five lay dead. The Romans then held back from him, so Jabalah came furiously out against him. When he neared him he said, "O boy, you have exceeded the limits against us and gone overboard in fighting us."

'Abdurahmân ﷺ : And how is that? How have I transgressed the limits?

Jabalah : You are filling the Earth with our corpses! I have not come out to fight you but came because one of your companions came out to help you and this is against the qualities of nobility and justice.

'Abdurahmân ﷺ *(smiling)* : O Ibn al-Ayham, do you try to deceive me when 'Alî bin Abî Tâlib trained me? I have participated with him in many battles and other incidents.

Jabalah : I am not tricking you and speak nothing but the truth.

'Abdurahmân ﷺ : If you are speaking the truth then send one of your men against this supposed companion of mine for I am willing and equal to your challenge.

Jabalah : My lad, why do you not join us? I will baptise you in holy water from which you will emerge purified of all sins just as you were when you came out of your mother's womb. You will be of the party of the Cross and Bible, partake in the Communion and receive great awards from Caesar. I will marry you to my daughter and grant you my bounties. I will greatly honour and enrich you. I am he about whom your Prophet's poet composed this poem:

إن ابن جفنة من بقية معشر   لم تغذهم آباؤهم باللومِ
يعطي الجزيل ولا يراه بأنه   إلا كبعض عطية المذموم
لم ينسني بالشام إذ هو بارح   يومًا ولا متنصرًا بالروم
إن جئته يومًا تقر بمنزل   تسقي براحته من الخرطوم

Verily the son of Jafnah tribe has ancestors who are blameless,
He gives a lot but considers it to be quite worthless.
He did not forget me when he ominously went to Syria, nor when he became a Christian in Rome,
You will be at such a place where you will get every relaxation if you visit his home.
So hurry to accept what I am offering you to save yourself from destruction and to enjoy great bounties and luxury.

'Abdurahmân ﷺ : There is no deity except Allâh alone. He has no partner. Woe unto you, you son of a despicable man. Do you invite me to come from guidance and go to misguidance? From faith towards disbelief and ignorance? I am of those whose faith sits deeply in their hearts, know guidance from crookedness, verify the truth of Allâh's Prophet and despise whoever denies Allâh. Come and fight and leave this deception and impossibility. Come forward and do what you really intended to do in the first place so that I can strike off your head and dirty your nose with dust. Thus will the 'Arabs be free of the shame of being connected to you for you are a denier of the Most Merciful and a worshipper of crosses.

Jabalah became infuriated and attacked him. He wanted to stab him with his spear, but 'Abdurahmân ﷺ dodged it and then returned his attack. The two of them began thrusting their spears at each other until 'Abdurahmân ﷺ became exhausted from using the spear. He flung it down and unsheathed his sword. They continued fighting until he hit Jabalah's spear with his sword, cutting off the spear-point. Jabalah threw the stump aside and drew his sword. It had come from Kindah and was a relic of 'Âd. It was like lightning striking, breaking whatever it struck. Jabalah then launched a vicious attack against him.

Rafi' bin 'Umayrah narrates:

We were amazed at how 'Abdurahmân ﷺ fought, considering his youth and lack of support. They both struck at each other at the same time, but 'Abdurahmân overtook Jabalah, cutting through his shield right into his helmet which was of tempered steel. He inflicted a deep wound in Jabalah whose blood began flowing.

Jabalah then struck back cutting right through his chain-mail, armour and clothing, wounding his shoulder. When the pain struck 'Abdurahmân, he kept steady, pretending that the blow did not penetrate. He turned his horse and let loose its reins until he reached Khâlid ﷺ and his men.

Khâlid ﷺ : Did the blow of the enemy of Allâh reach you?

'Abdurahmân ﷺ : Yes.

He revealed his wounds to Khâlid ﷺ, so the Muslims took him off his horse and bandaged his wounds.

Khâlid ﷺ then said to him, "O son of as-Siddîq, Jabalah's blow might have cut you, but I swear that I will frighten them with regard to their prisoner just as they frightened me with regard to you."

Then he called out to Hammâm, "Bring that Christian here."

Hammâm brought Luke in front of Khâlid ﷺ who beheaded him.

28) Muslims face destruction

When the Romans saw what had happened to Luke, they went into mourning. Jabalah was angry and said, "You have been nothing but treacherous in killing our man." Then he shouted at the Romans and Christian 'Arabs to launch an attack. When Khâlid ﷺ saw them attacking the Muslims he said to Hammâm, "Stay with 'Abdurahmân and defend him against whoever intends to harm him. Thereafter he called out to the Muslims, "O Sahâbah of Rasûlullah ﷺ! None of you should move away from his partner to go and attack alone. Rather, you should all stay around me. Help from Allâh comes amazingly quickly."

So they gathered around him as he had ordered them and none came against them except such a person who would soon lose any further hope of living.

The Romans and Christian 'Arabs all attacked them, but the Muslims remained firm despite the battle becoming more and more intense and their becoming more alarmed.

Rabî'ah bin 'Âmir narrates:

By Allâh! Whenever the horses would start grouping against us, Khâlid ﷺ would personally go and shield us against them and scatter them. This continued until hunger and thirst started afflicting us.

Rafi' bin 'Umayrah narrates:

When I saw hunger and thirst seizing us, I said to Khâlid ﷺ, "O Abû Sulaymân, this is the end of us."

"By Allâh!" he replied, "You have spoken the truth for I forgot to bring with me the blessed cap."

Matters became grave for the Muslims. They lost patience, were out of breath and realised that the Christians would destroy them.

Even though the Earth was filled with Christian corpses, the Christians were about to complete the capture of the Muslims. Suddenly an unseen voice proclaimed, "He who thought himself to be safe has been abandoned and he who was fearing is helped. O bearers of the Qur'an, receive glad-tidings, relief has come to you from the Most Merciful who has helped you against the Cross-worshippers." This is after hearts flew into throats (out of fear), and the cutting swords did their work whilst horses had pounded against them.

Busrah narrates from Ishâq bin 'Abdillâh:

I was with Abû 'Ubaydah's army at Shayzar when one night he came out of his tent screaming, "O Muslims, to arms! The Muslim horsemen have been surrounded." We rushed to him from every direction and said, "What is happening to you, O commander?" Abû 'Ubaydah replied, "Rasûlullâh ﷺ came to me while I was sleeping, pulled me and scolded me thus, 'O Ibn al-Jarrâh, you sleep and do not help a noble people? Get up and go to Khâlid bin al-Walîd who is surrounded by a despicable people. If Allâh wills, you will meet up with him.'"

The Muslims immediately rushed to don their armour and weapons and mounted their horses in search of Khâlid ﷺ.

29) The blessed hair of Rasûlullâh ﷺ

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, riding at the head of the Muslims, suddenly saw a rider whose horse was speeding at a terrific pace ahead of the Muslims, so he ordered some men to go and catch up but none were able to due to the horse's great speed. When the horses of the Muslims grew too weak to catch up, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ thought that it must be an angel sent ahead of them by Allâh, so he called out, "Take it easy, O noble horseman, who drives others away. Be gentle upon yourself. May Allâh have mercy upon you."

Upon hearing this call, the rider stopped until Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ caught up and saw that it was Umm Tamîm, Khâlid's ﷺ wife.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : What made you go ahead of us like that?

Umm Tamîm : O commander, I heard you screaming, "Verily Khâlid has been surrounded by the enemy." So I said, "Khâlid will never be helpless as long as he carries the blessed hair of Rasûlullâh ﷺ with him," when I accidently came across the blessed cap (wherein he keeps the hair). Seeing that he must have forgotten it, I grabbed it and rushed to deliver it to him.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : I praise Allâh at your action, O Umm Tamîm. Go with Allâh's help and blessings.

Umm Tamîm narrates:

I was with a group of 'Arab women of Mathhij and other tribes when we came across the rising dust and the battle. We saw the spears and swords flashing like twinkling stars but no sound was heard from the Muslims.

We disliked that and said, "The enemy is overpowering them."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ shouted, "Allahu Akbar!" and charged with the Muslims.

Râfi' bin 'Umayrah narrates:

We had lost hope of living when suddenly we heard shouts of, "Lâ ilâha illallâh" and "Allâhu Akbar!" In a short while, the Muslims had the Christians surrounded and

thrust their swords at them from every direction. Voices were raised and screams were heard.

Mus'ab bin Muhârib al-Yashkurî narrates:

I saw the Cross-Worshippers fleeing while Khâlid sat firmly in his saddle wondering where the shouts were coming from. A rider appeared from the dust-cloud shoving aside the Roman horsemen who were fleeing. When the rider reached near us, Khâlid ﷺ went ahead and asked, "Who are you, O brave horseman?"

Umm Tamîm replied, "I am your wife, Umm Tamîm, O Abû Sulaymân. I have brought you the blessed cap through which you are helped against your enemies, so take it. By Allâh! You did not forget it except that this predestined event should come to pass."

As she handed it to him a flash of light like blinding lightning could be seen emanating from the hair of Rasulullah ﷺ.

Khâlid ﷺ put on the cap and immediately attacked the Christians who fled in confusion. The Muslims launched a massive attack and in a short while the enemy were overpowered leaving none except the dead, wounded and prisoners behind.

The first to flee was Jabalah, followed by his Christian 'Arabs. After returning from the pursuit the Muslims gathered around the flag of Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ to greet him and each other. They thanked Allâh for granting them safety. He looked at Khâlid ﷺ and his men who resembled purple stumps. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ shook his hand, congratulated him on attaining safety and said, "O Abû Sulaymân, Allâh be praised at your deeds. You have dealt with the treacherous ones and pleased the Grand King. O Muslims, I believe that we should move without delay against Qinsarîn and al-'Awâsim. We will kill their men and seize their wealth." The Muslims replied, "What an excellent view, O Trustworthy One of the Ummah."

30) The caravan of Ba'labakk

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ selected a group of horsemen to act as the vanguard under 'Iyâd bin Ghânim al-Ash'arî. Upon reaching Qinsarîn and al-'Awâsim he ordered them to start raids. So they began the raids, capturing children and killing men. The people of Qinsarîn therefore shut the city gates and offered peace on payment of Jizyah. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ accepted and wrote out the terms of surrender. He imposed on each person the Jizyah of four dînârs as 'Umar ﷺ had ordered him to do.

After the conquest of Qinsarîn, Abû 'Ubaydah said to the Sahâbah, "Advise me for Allâh has commanded His Prophet ﷺ thus:

وَشَاوِرۡهُمۡ فِي ٱلۡأَمۡرِۖ فَإِذَا عَزَمۡتَ فَتَوَكَّلۡ عَلَى ٱللَّهِۚ

And consult them in the affair. Then when you have reached a decision place your trust upon Allâh. [3:159]

So shall we go to Aleppo which is heavily fortified, or to Antioch which has many slaves and soldiers or shall we return?"

Muslims : O commander, how can we go to Aleppo and Antioch when the truce is expiring with Armîn, Hims and Jûsîyah. Doubtless they have fortified themselves, stocked up food and reinforced their men. We fear that they will attack us in the territory which we have occupied, especially at Ba'labakk and its fort, for they are strong and numerous.

Abû 'Ubaydah left Khâlid at Hims and proceeded to Ba'labakk. When he neared it, he came across a caravan consisting of mules and other beasts carrying different kinds of merchandise. Seeing this great caravan which had come from the coast heading for Ba'labakk, Abû 'Ubaydah said, "What a great caravan this is."

Muslims : We do not know anything about it.

Abû 'Ubaydah : Then go and find out.

Some horsemen went and returned to report that it was a Roman caravan carrying much merchandise.

Shaddâd bin 'Adî narrates:

Most of the caravan's load was sugar for Ba'labakk. Abû 'Ubaydah said, "Ba'labakk is at war with us, we have no agreement with them. Take what Allâh has sent to you for that is Allâh's booty unto you."

So we captured the caravan which had 400 loads of sugar, olives, pistachios etc. and took the people prisoner. Abû 'Ubaydah declared, "Refrain from killing them and seek ransoms from them."

We released them upon payment of gold, silver, robes and beasts. We used the sugar to make a thick paste of flour and clarified butter and a sweet made of flour and honey with butter and olives. Imagine how the Muslims ate! We spent the night at the place where we had attacked the caravan and remained there until morning. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ then ordered us to advance to attack Ba'labakk, but some of the people of the caravan had escaped and informed the Ba'labakkîs of what had happened to the caravan. The governor of Ba'labakk was another Herbius. When this warrior heard of the coming of the Muslim army, he called his soldiers to get their weapons and gear. He led his forces out of Ba'labakk, knowing that Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was coming towards him with the Muslim army.

31) Battle of Ba'labakk

The two armies spotted each other at midday. The patrician had a cavalry of 7,000 plus the mob which had followed him from his land. When the Muslims saw him they called out, "To arms! To arms!"

The bravest Muslims rushed to the frontlines, pointing their spears and unsheathing their swords. The patrician in the meantime was arranging military formation of his men when one of his generals said, "What do you wish to do with the 'Arabs?"

Herbius : I will fight them to such an extent that they will never again entertain desires against us and attack our city.

General : I opine that you should not fight them, but should return back safely, for verily the people of Damascus could not overcome them, nor could the armies of Ajnâdayn and Palestine repulse them. You have heard enough of what they did recently to the governors of Qinsarîn and Amorium and the Christian 'Arabs and how they made them turn on their heels in defeat. The best thing for you to do is to return to save yourself and those with you.

Herbius : I will neither return, nor will I be defeated. I have heard that most of their army is stationed at Hims with Khâlid bin al-Walîd. This is but a small number sent to us as booty by Christ.

General : As for me, I will not fight them for I disagree with you.

The general lifted his horse's reins and returned to Ba'labakk, followed by many of the Christians. As for the patrician, he continued his preparations, bent on battle. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ saw this, so he too arranged the Muslim ranks and said, "O people, may Allâh have mercy upon you. Know that Allâh has promised victory unto you and has

already helped you. He defeated most of these people already. This city to which you are heading for lies in the centre of the area you have already conquered. The people have stocked up on provisions, equipment and power, so beware of vanity, but seek revenge and fight the enemies of the Dîn. Help Allâh's Dîn and He will help you."

He then led the Muslims in attack.

'Âmir bin Rabî'ah narrates:

I swear that we only fought them for a single round when they turned and fled, heading for the city walls. The governor, wounded in seven places, entered the city with his men. The general who had advised him against fighting the 'Arabs met him and said, "So *where* is the booty of the 'Arabs which you captured?"

Patrician : May Christ disfigure you! You dare to mock me? The 'Arabs have killed my men and inflicted these wounds on me.

General : Did I not tell you that you will ruin yourself and your men?

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ reached the city and found it to be formidable; built like a fortress. The inhabitants had gathered all their wealth and animals and put them in the centre of the city. The Muslims saw all this wealth spread out like a swarm of locusts. When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ saw the city, its fortifications, its wealth, its many men and intense cold – Ba'labakk remains cold, summer or winter - he said to the elite amongst the S̱aẖâbah ﷺ, "What is your opinion on this city?"

They agreed on besieging the city.

Mu'âth bin Jabal ﷺ : May Allâh keep the commander in a good state. The Romans are overcrowded in the city and I think that it cannot hold them all. If we protract a siege against them we can hope for Allâh's help and victory at our hands.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O Ibn Jabal, how do you know that they are crowded in the city?

Mu'âth ﷺ : I was the first to charge against the enemy and upon reaching them I saw the city and the White Fort. I tried to reach their front row so that the Muslims could cut them off from the city (but no Muslim joined me). I saw them entering the city like a flood from every gate and the city became filled with rural folk, villagers, cattle and animals. The city became tight for them until their voices resembled the droning of bees due to their great number.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : You have spoken the truth, O Mu'âth. By Allâh! I know you to have only a good and correct opinion.

32) Romans reject surrender

The Muslims spent the night guarding each other until the morning, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ then sent the following letter to the people of Ba'labakk:

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

From : The commander of the Muslim armies in Syria and the representative of the Commander of the Believers, Abû 'Ubaydah bin al-Jarrâh

To : The opposing and stubborn people of Ba'labakk.

Allâh Who is Most Pure from defect, Most High and to Whom belongs all praise has made this Dîn triumph and has aided His believing friends over the armies of the Disbelievers. He has conquered the cities and disgraced the people of wickedness. We send this letter to explain ourselves to your great and small ones for we are a people whose religion does not allow oppression and fighting unnecessarily without finding out your state. So if you come to terms just as the cities before you did, we will grant you safety and the responsibility of Islâmic rule will fall on us. If you are set on fighting us, then we will seek Allâh's help against you and wage war against you.

Hurry with your reply.

إِنَّا قَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْنَآ أَنَّ ٱلْعَذَابَ عَلَىٰ مَن كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ

...Peace be upon him who follows guidance. It has been revealed to us that punishment is for those who deny and turn away. [20:48]

He folded the letter and gave it to a subject Disbeliever ordering him to deliver it to the people of Ba'labakk and to return with a reply. When the messenger reached the city walls he called out, "I am a messenger unto you from the 'Arabs." They dropped a rope which he tied around his waist. They lifted him up to them and took him to the governor to whom he delivered the letter.

Herbius gathered the soldiers and generals, read out the letter to them and said, "Present your views on this matter."

A patrician from amongst his advisors said, "Personally I feel that we should not fight them. We have no power to fight them and once peace is attained we will be safe, calm and prosperous just as the people of Arakah, Palmyra, Hawrân, Busrâ and Damascus have become. If we fight them they will defeat us, kill our men, enslave us and take our women. Peace is therefore better than war."

Herbius : May Christ have no mercy upon you. I have never seen a greater coward or less enduring man than you. How can you talk of handing our city over to this 'Arab waste especially now that you have been acquainted with their war tactics and fighting and have tested them in battle? Had I attacked their left wing I would have defeated them.

Patrician : O really? I am sure that they and even their centre were quite terrified of you.

The two ended up arguing and swearing at each other with the populace split into two camps – one wanting to fight and the other wanting to surrender. The governor shredded the letter, threw the pieces at the messenger and ordered his men to lower him out of the city.

The messenger reached the Muslim camp where he reported to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ what had happened and said, "O commander, the majority of them are intent on fighting."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called out to the Muslims, "Be severe against them and bear in mind that this city is in the centre of all that you have conquered. If it remains unconquered, it will be a nuisance to those whom you have made peace with and you will not be able to travel unhindered."

The Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ got their weapons and gear and proceeded towards the city walls where the defenders looked down on them. Both sides began flinging stones and arrows at each other. The governor had placed his seat in one of the fort's towers which faced an-Namlah. He had bandaged his wounds and wore his weapons and upper-body armour and on his head was a jewelled cross. The patricians and others surrounding him were wearing golden armour and were very well equipped. Around their necks hung golden jewelled crosses and in their hands they carried bows and arrows.

33) The Roman attack

'Âmir bin Wahb al-Yashkurî narrates:

I participated in the Battle of Ba'labakk. When the Muslims charged against the city walls the Roman arrows came flying like locusts. Some 'Arabs had no weapons and were struck by the arrows. I saw the Romans throwing each other down on us from the walls just like birds fall down on grains. I went to one of the enemy who had been flung down so that I could behead him when he shrieked, "Alghawth!Alghawth!" in Greek. From experience in the war we understood that to be a request for safety from us, so I said to him, "Woe unto you! I grant you safety but tell me who threw you down the wall?"

He started prattling in Greek, which I did not understand.

I took him to Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ tent where I said to him, "O commander, get someone who understands this Christian's language for I saw them flinging each other down from the walls."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ said to a translator who was present, "Find out this Christian's story and why they are throwing each other down."

Translator : Woe unto you! We have granted you safety, so answer us honestly. Why are you throwing each other down?

Roman : We do not throw our own people down. We are the villagers and country folk who upon hearing of your coming here from Qinsarîn fled to the city for protection from all the rural districts because we knew that a large army is here at Ba'labakk. The place was overcrowded and the roads blocked. Some of us went to the city walls. When there was no other place for us to go to we moved in the towers and onto the city walls. Then when you attacked, the soldiers of the city came

to us and started trampling us. When the fighting intensified against them they started throwing us from the towers and walls.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was overjoyed and said, "I hope that Allâh is granting them as booty for us." The battle intensified and men were ground up like wheat. Screams were raised whilst the Romans defended their wall and none of the Muslims could get near to it due to the intensity of arrows and stones raining down upon them.

Ghiyâth bin 'Adî at-Tâî narrates:

During the first day of the attack on Ba'labakk, twelve Muslims were martyred while many Romans, soldiers and civilians, were killed. We returned to the camp having no appetite whatsoever for food or drink, only wanting to warm ourselves by the fire due to the intense chill. Thus we spent the night lighting fires and taking turns to watch the camp.

After we had prayed Salâtul Fajr an announcer proclaimed on behalf of Abû 'Ubaydah, "It is my firm resolve that none of you shall battle these people until he has gone to his luggage and prepared for himself hot food. He should eat to be strong against the enemy."

We went to make our preparations, resulting in a delay which made the Romans think that we were not coming out of cowardice and weakness. Herbius therefore called out, "Go out and get them. May Christ bless you."

Ghiyâth bin 'Adî narrates:

The Muslims did not even realise that the gates were open with the Roman cavalry and infantry advancing against us like a swarm of locusts. Some of us were stretching our hands towards the food and others were still baking their bread when the herald proclaimed, "O cavalry of Allâh, mount your horses and prepare for Jihâd. Attack the enemy before they destroy you."

Hamdân bin Usayd al-Hadramî narrates:

I had some bread with me and took some olive oil to use as gravy with the bread when the herald proclaimed, "To arms! To arms!"

By Allâh! I quickly grabbed a piece of bread, dipped it in the oil and put it in my mouth. I stood up quickly and jumped on the horse bareback. In my haste to respond

to the call, I became confused and grabbed one of the tent pillars and charged the Romans. By Allâh! I did not realise what I was doing and was not even aware of myself until I was amongst the Romans, hacking them to bits and pieces with my sword. I saw the enemy spread out while Abû 'Ubaydah was shouting loudly, "Today is the day, not afterwards." He had erected a flag to which the people were rushing. Seeing the enemy's fierceness in fighting and perseverence in the attack of the Muslims, he led an attack against them surrounding them from all sides. Amongst those who were with him were 'Amr bin Ma'dîkarab, Ibn Abî Bakr, Rabî'ah bin 'Âmir, Mâlik bin al-Ashtar, Dirâr and Thul Kalâ' al-Himyarî ﷺ. Praise be to Allâh, they fought most valiantly and proved themselves most brave.

As a result of their attack, the Romans began fleeing back to the city walls and shut the city gates. The Muslims returned to their camp to light their fires and bury the martyrs. The Muslim chiefs approached Abû 'Ubaydah and said, "O commander, may Allâh have mercy upon you. Have you resolved upon any plan?

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : We should withdraw half a Farsakh (2.7 km) from the city to give your horses space to roam in and to prevent a similar attack from being repeated. Help comes only from Allâh Most High.

He then summoned Sa'îd bin Zayd bin 'Amr bin Nufayl ﷺ, tied a flag for him, gave him command of over 500 horsemen and 300 infantry and ordered them to go down to the valley and fight the enemy at the gates so as to preoccupy them from turning towards the Muslims. Similarly Dirâr ﷺ was given command of 500 cavalry and 100 infantry to attack the Syria Gate. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ instructed him thus, "O Dirâr, show your bravery against the Romans. Go and fight them."

Dirâr ﷺ : Nobly and lovingly (do I obey).

Both armies departed for their separate destinations.

34) Second Roman attack

In the morning the Romans opened the gates and emerged as a large crowd around the governor, who said, "Beware O Christians, for the people of this religion before you were too cowardly to fight the 'Arabs and were unable to fight them in battle!"

Christians : O sir, we fight with willing and happy hearts for although we feared them before finally experiencing battle with them, we now know that they cannot persevere any more than us in battle because they wear uncouth, old clothing or

tattered furs while we wear armour and chain-mail and we have gifted our lives to Christ.

When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ saw the great multitude, he called out, "O Muslims, do not lose heart for then the wind of your power will dissipate. Be patient for Allâh is with the patient ones."

The reality was that the Romans were scared because of what had occurred the previous day. They then launched a massive attack.

Sahl bin Sabbâh al-'Absî narrates:

I witnessed the attack of the Ba'labakkîs. On the second day they come against us trying to achieve what they had attempted on the first day and mounted a fierce assault against us. I was wounded in my upper right arm and could not lift a sword or even move my arm, so I dismounted my horse and roamed amongst my friends, thinking to myself, "If anyone targets me I will not be able to defend myself."

I climbed to the top of the mountain and watched the two armies. The Romans desired to exterminate the Muslims, who were calling out for help. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was making du'â. Each tribe and family was vying to outdo the other in battle.

I was behind a rock on the mountain watching the striking of swords on helmets and shields from which sparks were flying. The two armies clashed and were indistinguishable from one another. I said to myself, "Woe unto me! Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ is in a fearful situation in one place while Dirâr and Sa'îd bin Zayd are at other places. Perhaps they could be of help in removing this terrifying violence from him."

So I hurried to break some trees and piled the wood up. Using a piece of flint that I had with me I lit a fire and burnt the wood - green pieces as well as dry ones, resulting in a thick smoke arising. This was in fact the signal for us to gather at night in Syria i.e. to light a smoky fire. As the smoke rose to the sky, Dirâr ﷺ and Sa'îd ﷺ and their men saw it and called out to each other, "May Allâh have mercy. Let us get to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ for this smoke indicates a grave matter. The correct thing to do is to gather our horses in one place."

So they rode fast until they saw the Muslims in the throes of battle and in a most difficult and terrifying situation. Suddenly a voice called out, "O bearers of the Qurân, help has come to you from the Most Merciful against the worshippers of the cross." They saw Sa'îd bin Zayd ﷺ and Dirâr ﷺ coming at the head of the cavalry

with their spears readied. The two now attacked the Romans who had been certain of victory up until then.

When the flags of the Muslims appeared the Romans turned to see what was happening and discovered that the Muslims had come from behind and cut them off from the city. They wailed, "O ruin! O destruction!" thinking that reinforcements had arrived for the Muslims and that the governor had deceived them.

When the governor saw their apathy, he called out, "Woe unto you! Do not return to the city. You have been cut off from it due to a trick of the 'Arabs." They obeyed and formed a circle around him, defending each other.

35) Romans trapped in the ruins

The governor led them to the mountain on his left-hand side, with Sa'îd ﷺ and Dirâr ﷺ coming from the right-hand side of the fort, attacking and pursuing them. The Romans arrived at the mountain and took refuge in an empty fortified building. Sa'îd ﷺ continued coming after them with his 500 cavalry, having not heard Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ announcing, "O people, none should break away from us to pursue them for their retreat may actually be a trick against you so that when you become separated they will attack you." Had Sa'îd ﷺ heard him he would not have gone out.

Seeing the Romans in the mountain, Sa'îd ﷺ said, "These are people whom Allâh intends to destroy. Surround them from all directions and do not spare a single one of them who shows his head until the Muslims join us and we receive further orders from the commander."

Turning to one of the senior Muslims he said, "Act in my place so that I can go and find out what Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and those with him think."

He then took about twenty of his men and went until they met up with the Muslims.

When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ saw him he said, "O Sa'îd, where are your men? What have you done with them?"

Sa'îd ﷺ : Glad tidings! The Muslims are in a good state and safe. They are besieging the enemies of Allâh in the mountain.

He then narrated the whole incident to him.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Praise be to Allâh who defeated them in their own lands and scattered them. However what is this disobedience from the two of you (Sa'îd and

Dirâr ﷺ)? Did I not order you to stay at the gates to occupy the enemy there? What brought you back to me? The Muslims and myself were fearful about your condition, fearing that the Romans had destroyed you and therefore we did not go against those who were fleeing.

Sa'îd ﷺ : By Allâh! I did not disobey your orders, nor did I oppose your words. I was stationed where you had ordered me. We saw black smoke rising so we said, "By Allâh! This must be some catastrophe suffered at the hands of the Romans or a signal of the Muslims to call us," so we rushed to you.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had an announcement made, "Whoever lit the fire and made the smoke on the mountain should report to the commander, Abû 'Ubaydah."

Sahl bin Sabbâh narrates:

When I heard the announcement I answered the herald and reported to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who asked me, "What made you so audacious as to do that?"

I narrated the whole incident to him. He said, "Allâh has guided you to Paradise, but beware of taking any action after this without your commander's permission."

36) The Muslims are trapped

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and Sahl were speaking when Munhadir bin al-Jabal shouted, "To arms! To arms! O Ummah of the Bearer of glad-tidings and warnings, go and join your brethren who are surrounded by the Romans and are in a serious situation."

The governor had advanced against the Muslims and called out to the Christians, "O worshippers of Christ, get this paltry number of disgusting people who surround you. Kill them and enter the city for if you kill them you will break the 'Arabs' power and they will leave you alone."

Mus'ab bin 'Adî narrates:

I was amongst the men of Sa'îd bin Zayd at Ba'labakk. We had surrounded the governor and his men at the mountain when, before we realised what was happening, the Romans came charging at us from all directions. We called out to each other and gathered together. By Allâh! Their cavalry poured out against us and surrounded us after we had been surrounding them. Our slogan that day was simply, "Patience! Patience!"

We were in a bad state and terrible anxiety overcame us when we heard a loud voice all over the mountain proclaiming, "Is there no man who will give his life in the Path of Allâh by going to call the Muslims to arms? Indeed they are near to us but do not know what has befallen us."

Upon hearing this call I spurred my horse with my ankle. It was a prime horse which would race like the blowing wind or like water gushing forth from a burst tight pipe. It was like a big mountain. By Allâh! It sped under me like lightning and the Romans could catch nothing of it except its dust after I killed two of them. My horse raised its legs above rocks and went over rough terrain until I saw the Muslim army and called out, "To arms! To arms! O Ummah of the Bearer of glad tidings and warnings."

When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ heard the cry he summoned the archers. When 500 of those who bear 'Arabian bows responded, he placed them under Sa'îd bin Zayd and said to him, "May Allâh have mercy upon you. Hurry and join your men before the enemy gets them."

Then he called Dirâr ﷺ and his men and said to him, "Go and join your brother, Sa'îd bin Zayd."

The Muslims flew out like a swarm of locusts and climbed the mountain. They saw the Romans surrounding the Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

Abû Zayd bin Waraqah bin 'Âmir narrates:

I was amongst the men of Sa'îd bin Zayd who fought at the mountain. They had surrounded us but we were patient like noble men. Amongst us seventy men were so severely wounded that they were close to death. We were fatigued from the fighting and injuries when suddenly we heard cries of, "Lâ ilâha illallâh" and "Allâhu Akbar." When the Romans saw the flags of the Muslims they fled back to the building. We caught up with those retreating, killing and wounding them. The enemy took shelter in the ruins which we surrounded. None dared expose his head without being shot at with many arrows readied. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was informed of the Muslim and Christian death-tolls and that the enemy was being besieged without having any provisions or water. He said, "Praise be to Allâh! O people return to your goods and pitch your tents around the city for Allâh is fulfilling His promise of help."

The Muslims shifted to their first site outside the city. Scouts were despatched, sheep and camels sent for grazing and the slaves were sent out to gather firewood. Fires were lit and the fear dispelled and they now all felt at ease.

On the other hand, the Ba'labakkîs were spread out on the city walls, wailing in anguish in Greek. Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ asked one of the translators, "What are they saying?"

"O commander," replied the translator, "They are saying, 'Woe unto us! How great is our affliction. O ruin of our homes! O death of our men! The 'Arabs have conquered our lands.'"

37) The Romans seek a way out

That evening Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ sent a messenger to Sa'îd bin Zayd ؓ with this message, "O Ibn Zayd, may Allâh have mercy upon you. Be very careful with the Muslims with you. Make a special effort to see that not a single Roman escapes you. Do not give them the space of even one foot for a single one to escape for then their last man will also escape like the first man. You will then be like a man who had something in his hand and then destroyed it himself."

When the message reached Sa'îd ؓ he ordered his men to besiege them from all sides and permitted only 100 armed men to gather firewood. They obeyed, lit fires and spent the night circling the building reciting, "Lâ ilâha illallâh" and "Allâhu Akbar!"

Upon seeing this the governor said to his men, "Woe unto you! We have lost hope of any plan and our thinking was flawed. We have neither help nor reinforcements nor allies. Even if we make any great effort the 'Arabs will effortlessly keep us trapped here in this building. We have in fact trapped ourselves in this prison where there is neither food nor drink. If this continues for a second or third day then our strong ones will weaken and our weak ones will die. We will be forced to surrender and then they will kill us all. All our strategy will be void."

Patricians : O Sir, what should we do?

Governor : We will deceive them. We will ask them for a peace pact for ourselves and the people of the city – as they had asked, then I will guarantee them that I will conquer the city on their behalf and be under their rule. Once we are inside the city we will attack them from the city walls above. We might get a message through to the governors of 'Ayn al-Jawz and Jûsîyah. Hopefully they will send reinforcements and fight the 'Arabs outside the city while we attack from above the city walls. Christ will suffice us this time.

A General : O Sir, know that the governor of Jûsîyah will never come to our aid because he is too busy himself and may be in a siege similar to ours. In fact we were informed just before the 'Arabs invaded us that they surrendered having no ability or power to fight the 'Arabs. As for the people of 'Ayn al-Jawz they are spread to the furthest ends of Syria, involved in their trade and most probably have entered into 'Arab rule. So now consider what is best for yourself and your citizens.

The governor was forced to concede to all of this. In the morning he climbed to the top of the wall of the building and called out, "O 'Arabs, is there anyone amongst you who understands Greek? I am the governor, Herbius." A translator who heard him went to Sa'îd bin Zayd ﷺ and said, "O Sir, that Christian is their governor, it appears that he wants to speak to you."

Sa'îd ﷺ : Let him send whom he wills. Tell him that his messenger will be safe until he returns to him.

38) The Roman envoy

When the translator informed him of this, he turned to one of his senior officers and said, "You see our situation and how the 'Arabs have cut off our escape. Christ has permitted Syria to be ruined. The 'Arabs have triumphed over us and we are in dire straits. If we do not seek their guarantee of safety they will destroy us and our horsemen and then they will rule over our women and children and divide our wealth and children amongst themselves. We have no hope of outside help for every city is too busy defending itself. So go down and obtain their guarantee of safety. This will enable me to deceive them once we have returned to the city. I may be able to entice their leader with some wealth so that he will leave us for some other place, then we will see what transpires between him and Heraclius."

Upon reaching Sa'îd ﷺ, the envoy wanted to prostrate but was prevented from doing so. The Muslims rushed to him and physically restrained him. Perplexed, he asked, "Why do you prevent me from honouring him?"

The translator conveyed the question to Sa'îd ﷺ who replied, "He and I are both slaves of Allâh Most High. This kind of honouring and prostration belongs solely to Allâh, the Eternal, The Worshipped One, the King."

Envoy : So this is how you have been able to obtain victory against us and other nations.

Sa'îd ﷺ : Why have you come here?

Envoy : I have come to obtain a guarantee of safety for our governor and a guarantee that you will not break your word with us.

Sa'îd ﷺ : It is not of the conduct of leaders and generals of armies to violate their guarantees of safety. We, praise be to Allâh, do not break our word. I will grant amnesty to your governor and all those with him who lay down their arms, surrender and seek amnesty.

Envoy : We want this guarantee from your superiors and your subordinates.

Sa'îd ﷺ : Granted.

The envoy returned to inform the governor and then said, "Go, but beware of deception for the deceiver is always destroyed. These 'Arabs do not betray their trusts and word."

39) The Romans come out

I (al-Wâqidî) have been informed that Herbius stripped off whatever he was wearing, including the brocade and laid down his arms. He was dressed in wool and emerged bare-headed, bare-footed and humiliated. His men accompanied him. They came before Sa'îd ﷺ who fell prostrate before Allâh, saying, "All praise be to Allâh Who has removed the tyrants from us and made us masters over their princes and kings." Then he turned to the governor and said, "Come closer." When he came to sit at his side, Sa'îd ﷺ asked him, "Do you always wear this or something else?"

Governor : By Christ and the Communion, never! I have never worn wool before, only silk and brocade. I am wearing this now because I have not come to fight you. Will you grant amnesty to my men and people?

Sa'îd ﷺ : As for those men here, they will be granted safety if they enter Islâm and then they will enjoy the same rights as we do. If they wish to remain on their old religion they will have to promise to never again carry arms against us. As for the city, Abû 'Ubaydah, my commander, is attacking it and I expect that Allâh has already granted him victory over it. I want to take you to him so that he can hear you out and make peace with your people. Come with me under my protection. If peace is not achieved I will bring you and those of your men who so wish, back to this place and then Allah will decide between us. Indeed He is the best of deciders.

Governor : I will do that.

Sa'îd then called Sa'îd bin Zayd bin Abî Waqqâs bin 'Awf al-'Adawî and said to him, "O Ibn Abî Waqqâs, convey the glad-tidings of what you have heard to Abû 'Ubaydah and hurry with your reply."

Sa'îd al-'Adawî mounted his great war-horse and raced away to Abû 'Ubaydah. He halted in front of him, made salâm and said, "May Allâh keep the commander in a good state. I convey the good news that the governor, Herbius, has sought amnesty from Sa'îd bin Zayd who wants to bring him to you to obtain your guarantees of peace and safety for him and the city". Abû 'Ubaydah fell down into prostration out of gratitude to Allâh. After raising his head he called out, "O people, advance to fight the city right now. Display all your weapons and shout, 'Allâhu Akbar,' so as to terrify them." The Muslims thus went and shook the city with their cries of, "Allâhu Akbar!" and terrified the Ba'labakkîs. The two sides challenged each other to combat. The Muslims surrounded the city from all sides.

Mirqâl bin 'Utbah went to inform them of the governor's surrender and said, "Save your lives, children and wealth by surrendering. If you refuse, then Allâh Most Blessed and High has promised us through the tongue of His Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that He will conquer your lands, cities and all else. Indeed Allâh is fulfilling that now." The Ba'labakkîs were scared witless, their hearts shaking with fear. Throwing dust on their faces, they exclaimed, "The governor has destroyed us and himself. Had we surrendered before this siege it would have been better for us."

The Muslims intensified the fighting.

40) Abû 'Ubaydah and the governor

When Abû 'Ubaydah found out that the fires of war were blazing at the city, he sent this message to Sa'îd, "Bring the governor quickly to us. He is guaranteed the safety which you granted him, for we do not renege on our promises."

When the messenger arrived at the building Sa'îd appointed a deputy and took the governor to Abû 'Ubaydah. He stood in front of Abû 'Ubaydah, saw his attire and the attire of those with him and the intensity of the battle against the city and began shaking his head and chewing his fingers in frustration.

Abû 'Ubaydah said to the translator, "Why is he shaking his head and biting his fingers as if he is regretting something lost?" When the translator asked him, he answered, "By Christ and by what He annointed! By the Church! By the Altar! I thought that you were greater in number than pebbles and better equipped. During

the battle and the intense violence it had seemed to us that you were as numerous as pebbles and grains of sand. We saw grey horses mounted by men dressed in green carrying yellow flags. Now that I have come here I do not see any sign of them whatsoever. I see that you are in reality quite few in number. What has happened to your gigantic army? Did you send them away to 'Ayn al-Jawz, Jûsîyah or some other place?"

After hearing this Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ said to the translator, "Say: Woe unto you! We are Muslims whom Allâh increases in the eyes of the Disbelievers and reinforces with angels just as He did at Badr. In this way Allâh has conquered your lands and forts and humiliated your kings."

This was translated to which the governor replied, "You have trampled Syria when the Kings of Persia, the Turks and the Jarâmiqah were unable to do so. We did not imagine that this would ever happen. As for our fortified city it is not concerned about a siege because there is no comparable city in the whole of Syria. Solomon, son of David, had built it for himself and made it his capital and treasury. Had we not come out from the city against you, we would never have surrendered nor would we be in the least frightened of you fighting us even if you had to besiege us for 100 years. Now all that has been lost, so will you offer fair terms of surrender to us for therein lies benefit for you and us. If we open the gates for you then by Christ and the True Bible you will not find any other city or fort in all of Syria difficult to capture."

This was translated to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who said to him, "Say: Praise be to Allâh Most High who has made us masters of your lands and homes. You will now have to pay Jizyah. You deluded yourself with false security until Allah showed you disgrace and humiliation after honour and power. We will most certainly rule your city, kill your men and imprison your champions. Whoever fights us is not included in our pact. There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty."

After this message was given the governor said, "I was certain that Christ was angry when he sent you to our city and gave you control. I exerted myself in warring against you and schemed against you, but my exertion and scheming were to no avail because you are a conquering nation. I only surrendered and placed my hands in yours after great effort on my part. I do not ask for pity upon myself nor do I ask for returning my hold over the land, I only desire what is best for the land for God does not love chaos. Will you please grant safety to the city, all it contains and those men who were with me?"

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : What do you offer in return?

Governor : State whatever you want.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Were Allâh to grant us the city peacefully filled with gold and silver, it would still not be worth the blood of one Muslim to me. However, Allâh grants the martyrs more than that in the Hereafter.

Governor : I offer 1000 Ûqiyah (122.5 kg) of white silver and 1000 robes of brocade.

41) The treaty

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ smiled and went to the Muslims saying, "Have you heard what this patrician says?"

Muslims : Yes.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : What is your opinion on the conditions that he has offered?

Muslims : We accept, but increase his fine.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ returned to him and said, "I will grant you peace on condition of 2000 Ûqiyah (244.9 kg) of red gold, 2000 Ûqiyah of white silver, 2000 robes of brocade, 5000 swords of your city and all the weapons of those men besieged at the building. You will also have to pay the annual land-tax as from next year as well as the annual Jizyah. You will never again bear arms against us. You will have no correspondence with foreign powers. You will not start any new insurrection. You will not erect any new churches. You will always act with goodwill towards the Muslims."

Governor : I accept all that except that I wish to impose my own condition on you and your men.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : What is your condition?

Governor : None of your men may enter the city. Your representative must stay outside the city to receive the Jizyah and land-tax. You will let me enter the city so as to placate the people and see to their affairs. We will also establish outside our city a market for the benefit of your representative. That market will stock all the different kinds of goods which can be found in our city. Your men may not enter the city because we fear that they may be rude to our elders thus spoiling relations between us which will lead to betrayal and breaking of the treaty.

Abû 'Ubaydah : Very well, and after the treaty we will also fight your enemies because we will have become responsible for you. The representative whom we will leave behind will be like a go-between and ambassador between us.

Governor : But he must remain outside the city where he can do what he wants to.

Abû 'Ubaydah : It is agreed because we have no need to enter your city.

Governor : Then agreement has been reached upon these terms.

The governor and Abû 'Ubaydah headed for the city. When they reached the gate, the governor uncovered his head and spoke to them in Greek. They recognised him and asked, "Where are your men?"

He narrated to them what had happened to his men and told them of the treaty. They wept and said, "Lives have been lost and wealth destroyed."

The governor called out, "O people, by Christ! I have not really made peace. I have other intentions."

They retorted, "You go and make peace for yourself. As for us we will not spare a single 'Arab to live and rule over us. None will enter our lands nor will they enter our city which is the most heavily fortified in all of Syria."

In the meantime Abû 'Ubaydah informed the Muslims of the treaty and ordered them to cease all attacks against the city. The translator heard what the Ba'labakkîs said and went to inform Abû 'Ubaydah. The governor turned to Abû 'Ubaydah and said to him, "Now what do you intend. Speak up or we will return to fighting as before."

Governor : By the True Bible and Jesus Christ! If they do not surrender then I will enter the city with a large force and place the sword upon them. I will slay their men, imprison their women and loot their wealth. I can do this for I know all the weak points and secret roads of the city.

Abû 'Ubaydah : What Allâh wills will be done.

42) The Romans pay war indemnity

The Romans who were listening from the wall to what the governor was saying to Abû 'Ubaydah were afraid. The governor turned again to the Romans and said, "What do you say about surrendering to the 'Arabs? I am a prisoner in their hands

and so are your cousins. If you do not surrender they will kill us all and then come and get you too."

Ba'labakkîs : O Sir, we are not capable of paying the amount they demand.

Governor : Woe unto you! I take responsibility for a quarter of the amount.

They were placated and said, "We allow none but you to enter. No 'Arab may come with you until we have put away our goods and hidden our women away."

Governor : Woe unto you! I surrendered on the terms that none of them will enter the city at all. The 'Arab representative and his men will stay outside the city. You will establish a market for him from which he can purchase.

The Romans were happy and opened the gates for him. He entered and Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ sent a message to Sa'îd bin Zayd ﷺ that he should release the besieged Romans. He lifted the siege and took them to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. They were disarmed and kept as hostage until such time as they paid their ransoms because it was feared that if they were to go to the city they would betray the Muslims. Thus they stayed with the Muslim army while the governor spent twelve days collecting the ransom in the city. During that period the Romans sent stores, supplies and fodder to the Muslims. When the money, robes and weapons were all collected the governor took them to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and said to him, "Take what was agreed upon and leave the men. Now choose your representative so that we can tell him in your presence that it is not permissible for him to attack us nor to demand that which we are not capable of nor will he enter our city."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called one of the chiefs of Quraysh, Râfi' bin 'Abdillâh as-Sahmî and said, "O Râfi' bin 'Abdillâh, I am appointing you over this city and am giving you 500 horsemen of your tribe and 400 others. I command you to do whatever Allâh has commanded you to do. So fear Allâh as He should be feared and rule with justice. Beware of tyranny and oppression, lest you be resurrected amongst the tyrants. Bear in mind that Allâh will question you about them and take you to task for whatever you take wrongfully. I have heard Rasûlullâh ﷺ saying, *Verily Allâh, Most Blessed and High revealed unto Mûsâ bin 'Imrân, peace be upon him, 'O Mûsâ! Do not oppress my slaves for it will be as if you have destroyed your own house yourself.'*

Establish your camp on the outskirts of the city. Be alert! You are amongst enemies. I warn you against the people of the coast. Send raiding expeditions against them in parties of 100 and 200. Do not allow any of the Ba'labakkîs to join you for that might

lead to enemies getting ideas and attacking you (with their help). Be good to whoever helps you and command with justice. Be as one with them. Order your men and companions to refrain from corruption and oppression against the citizens. Allah is watching you on my behalf. Was-salâm 'Alayka."

43) The price of greed

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ intended heading for Hims when the governor of 'Ayn al-Jawz arrived to offer his surrender. His war-fine was fixed at half that which Ba'labakk had paid and Sâlim bin Thuayb as-Sulamî was appointed as governor over them. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ advised him as he had advised Râfi' bin 'Abdillâh and then departed for Hims. Midway between ar-Ras and al-Kafîlah he met the governor of Jûsîyah who offered many gifts and terms of surrender. He then continued until he reached Hims.

Habbân bin Tamîm ath-Thaqafî narrates:

I was amongst those who remained behind with Râfi' bin 'Abdillâh. We erected tents of camel hair with pillars outside the city. None of us would enter Ba'labakk. We continued raiding the coastal Romans and Christian 'Arabs who had not entered into a treaty with us. After every expedition we would sell our booty to the Ba'labakkîs who were very pleased with our buying and selling and earned an enormous profit in a short period. They discovered that we are a people who do not deceive or lie or desire to wrong anybody and thus they were pleased with us.

When their patrician, Herbius, saw the great profit they were making from us and the low price they were buying at, he gathered them in the Ba'labakk Cathedral which is today the Jâmi' Masjid. When they gathered at the appointed time he said to all the traders, businessmen and marketers, "You know that I have made great effort for your sake and anxiously desire your well-being, as well as your wives' and children's welfare. You also know what money I have lost. Today I am but one of you. I surrendered my wealth and weapons and most of my slaves, men and cousins were killed, whereas you people have gained so much from the 'Arabs through your trade. I had to pay a full quarter of the fine all on my own.

Ba'labakkîs : You have spoken the truth. We accept all that you have described, but what do you want now?

Patrician : I will not trouble you to give me your wealth or of what is in your homes. However, you can render me a one-tenth share of your trade.

They were absolutely astounded at this proposal but said, "This man is one of us and a companion of our Emperor. He made great effort for us and defended our lives and wealth. Perhaps he deserves a share of our wealth."

They then accepted his proposal of a one-tenth share. He appointed an agent who collected the one-tenth from them and brought it to him.

When this collection of the one-tenth continued for forty days Herbius saw what a great amount was accumulating and said, "How much this city is earning; how profitable the trade is! I have never seen Ba'labakk in this state before."

He gathered them for a second time in the cathedral and said, "O people, you know how much I spent to pay your indemnity and this one-tenth does not suffice me. If you consider me to be one of you and wish to compensate my loss then give me now one-quarter of your trade so that I can swiftly be compensated, otherwise how long will the mere one-tenth take to compensate me for the loss of my wealth, weapons and men?" The traders refused and raised a hue and cry. They unsheathed their weapons and cut his men to shreds in the street, raising a great noise. The Muslims did not know what was happening and were alarmed at the commotion. They therefore gathered before the governor, Râfi' bin 'Abdillâh as-Sahmî and said, "O commander, do you not hear the noises of these people in the city?"

Râfi' : I heard just as you heard. What can I do when it is not permissible for us to enter the city? That was their condition for surrendering and we are more responsible to Allâh for fulfilling vows. If they come out to us and inform us of what is happening then we will reconcile between them and see to their welfare.

Râfi' had hardly finished speaking when the Ba'labakkîs came rushing to him. They stood in front of him and said, "We seek God's protection and yours," and informed him of all that had transpired and what the patrician had done on both occasions.

Râfi' : We have no say in this matter.

Ba'labakkîs : We have already slain him and all of his men.

The Sahâbah ﷺ were upset at that.

Râfi' : So what do you want now, O people of Ba'labakk?

Ba'labakkîs : We want you to enter the city, for we now permit you to enter.

Râfi' : I have no authority to do that unless my commander, Abû 'Ubaydah, permits me.

He then wrote a full report to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who authorised his entry.

44) Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ ultimatum

Mûsâ bin 'Âmir narrates from Yûnus bin 'Abdillâh who narrates from Sâlim bin 'Adî who narrates from his grandfather, 'Abdurahmân bin Muslim ar-Rabî'î who was amongst those who participated in the conquest of Syria from the beginning to the end:

Allâh had conquered Ba'labakk at the hands of the Muslims. Abû 'Ubaydah left Râfi' bin 'Abdillâh at Ba'labakk and went to meet up with Khâlid bin al-Walîd at Hims. When he came near to az-Zurâ'ah, which is near Hims, he tied a black flag with traces of white and gave it to Maysarah bin Masrûq al-'Absî, putting him in charge of the vanguard consisting of 5,000 Muslim horsemen. Upon Maysarah's arrival at Hims, Khâlid ﷺ came out to meet him and those Muslims with him.

Thereafter Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ sent Dirâr ﷺ with 5,000 cavalry and then sent 'Amr bin Ma'dîkarab ﷺ. He himself led the remainder of the army and upon seeing Hims exclaimed, "O Allah, hasten our victory against her and leave the Disbelievers without help."

The Muslims all came out to welcome him and those with him.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ encamped at the river-bend and then wrote the following letter to the people of Hims and their new governor, also called Herbius:

> *In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*
>
> *From : Abû 'Ubaydah, governor of Syria for the Commander of the Believers, 'Umar bin al-Khattâb, and general of his armies.*
>
> *Allâh has conquered your lands for us. The greatness of your city should not delude you, nor should the strength of your buildings or the numbers of your men. Once war comes then your city is nothing to us except like an earthenware pot which we will put in the middle of our army and fill with meat. Our entire army will then eagerly anticipate eating therefrom. We are*

already circling the pot waiting for the meat to be cooked so that we can eat it.

We call you to that Dîn which our Rabb, Most Honourable and Majestic, is pleased with for us. If you accept then we will depart from you and leave some men behind to teach you the Dîn and whatever Allâh Most High has ordained upon you. If Islâm is not acceptable to you then we will impose Jizyah upon you. If you refuse to accept Islâm and refuse to pay Jizyah, then come and battle us until Allâh decides the outcome and He is the best of all deciders.

He folded the letter and gave it to a Disbeliever who was under Muslim rule. He knew both 'Arabic and Greek. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ said to him, "Take this to Hims and return with a reply."

The messenger took it and went until he reached the city walls. The Romans wanted to shoot arrows and fling rocks at him, so he shouted in Greek, "O people, I am under the protection of the 'Arabs. I have brought a message to you from them."

They extended a rope down to him which he tied around his waist. They hoisted him up and took him to the governor. Standing humbly before the governor, he delivered the letter to him.

Governor : Have you abandoned your faith for that of the 'Arabs?

Messenger : No, but I, my wife and children are under their rule and protection. I have found them to be very good people. I sincerely advise you not to fight them, because they are great warriors who do not fear death and do not flee from it. They are steadfast upon their religion and prefer death to life. They have sworn that they will not leave your city until either you surrender or God grants them victory. I take oath in the name of my religion that you are more beloved unto me than them and I hope that victory will go your way, not theirs, but I really fear for you once they attack. So surrender to be safe or else you will live to regret your refusal.

45) Attack on Hims

These words angered the governor who said, "By Christ! Were you not a messenger I would have ordered your tongue to be cut off for your audacity against us."

After reading the letter he dictated a reply to his scribe. He began with his utterances of Disbelief and then said, "O 'Arabs, we have received your letter and understood its warnings, threats and promises. However, we are not like those whom you met before us in Syria. Caesar Heraclius himself seeks our help against his enemies and against those who send armies against him. We now find war against you unavoidable. Our city walls are impregnable, our gates are iron and our battle stubborn. Greetings."

He folded the letter and gave it to Abû 'Ubaydah's messenger, ordering his men to lower him down the wall with ropes. The messenger returned to Abû 'Ubaydah and delivered the letter to him. He tore it open and read it.

When the Muslims heard the contents of the letter they prepared for war. Abû 'Ubaydah divided them into four divisions. One division was sent under al-Mussayib bin Najîyah al-Fazârî to the Mountain Gate which is situated next to the Small Gate. The second, under al-Mirqâl bin Hishâm bin 'Uqbah bin 'Abi Waqqâs, proceeded to the Rastan Gate. The third, under Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân, went to the Syria Gate. Abû 'Ubaydah and Khâlid took the last group to the Small Gate.

The Muslims launched the assault from all directions. They fought for the remainder of the day. Both sides showered arrows at each other but the 'Arabs were able to deflect the Roman arrows with their shields whilst on the other hand, the Romans suffered much from the 'Arab onslaught. At night-fall both sides retired from the battle.

46) The second day

The next day Khâlid ordered all slaves to arm themselves with swords and shields.They were to attack the city walls with their swords and deflect the arrows with their shields.

Abû 'Ubaydah : And how will this benefit us, O Abû Sulaymân?

Khâlid : Please do not oppose me in this. I have resolved to fight them with slaves to show them that we regard them to be so worthless that we will not even fight them ourselves unless they themselves come out against us.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Do as you please for Allâh Most High guides you.

Khâlid ﷺ then ordered the 4,000 slaves to attack the wall and ordered 1,000 'Arabs to follow them. They mounted the attack. They struck with their swords and shot arrows, some of which hit and some of which broke.

The governor of Hims came to the wall. His generals and senior officers, surrounded him. He observed the Muslim attacks and remarked, "O my generals, by Christ! I did not think that 'Arabs looked like this. They are all black."

One of those who had escaped from Ajnâdayn said, "Sir, these are not 'Arabs but their slaves. They have sent their slaves to fight us as a strategy to show us that in their eyes we are not even worth the effort for them to personally fight us."

The governor replied, "By Christ! These people are even more dangerous than the 'Arabs and more firm-footed. Beware. If they should reach the wall its defences will be of no consideration to them and they will soon gain victory."

The slaves fought intensely for the rest of the day and launched several assaults against the gates. When night fell they returned to the Muslim camp. The governor sent a messenger to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ while some fighting continued in the darkness. When the Muslims sensed him they wanted to kill him. He called out, "I am the messenger of the patrician Herbius, governor of Hims. I want a reply to this letter."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ took the letter and read it. It read as follows :

> *O 'Arabs! We thought that you people had some kind of intelligence whereby you could plan war tactics and obtain victory. What a pity that it is not so! On the first day you spread out against all our gates and so we said, "This will be a severe siege! We will suffer much!" The next day you sent those poor little wretches to fight us. All they achieved was to break their own swords and weapons. Had I only known what great damage your little swords could do to our walls! It is now clear to us that you are quite weak-minded and know nothing at all of strategy. I therefore give you some advice which will benefit both parties. You should fight Caesar himself, conquering what is ahead of you just as you had conquered what is behind you. You will*

avoid troubling us and wronging us for it will only return to you to kill you. Otherwise we will come out to fight you in the morning and God will help whoever is on the Truth from amongst us.

47) 'Atâ's ﷺ scheme

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ consulted the Muslims with regards to the letter. A chief of Khath'am, 'Atâ bin 'Amr al-Kath'amî ﷺ was also present. He was advanced in age; had performed the Migration to al-Madînah at an early stage; was intelligent; and had led and organised many armies. He sprang to his feet upon hearing the contents of the letter and said, "Listen to me carefully for what I say will benefit the Muslims. Allâh has always guided what I say."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Speak, O Ibn 'Amr. We recognise you to be a well-wisher of the Muslims.

'Atâ ﷺ went to him and whispered, "May Allâh keep the commander in a good state! These people have had intelligence on your coming long before and their governor is braver and more cunning than his predecessors. They knew of the conquest of Ba'labakk and deduced that you would definitely besiege them next. They therefore stocked up with food, fodder, equipment and men, not leaving behind a scrap of food in the villages and countryside. They have enough to survive on for years. If we besiege them it will be protracted just as in the case of Damascus. I believe that you should trick them with a strategy. If this strategy works we will conquer this city quickly, if Allâh wills."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O Ibn 'Amr, what is your strategy?

'Atâ ﷺ : We should write to them asking them for supplies and fodder in exchange for us leaving them to conquer other cities. With their supplies thus depleted they will have to spread out in the cities to trade. That is when we will raid whoever comes out resulting in their numbers becoming fewer and weaker and a decrease in their supplies and fodder.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Your opinion is correct. I will do as you have mentioned and hope for Allâh's guidance and help.

He called for ink and paper and replied to the letter as follows :

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

I see benefit in your proposal for ourselves as well as you. We do not desire to wrong any of Allâh's slaves. However, you know that our army, horses and camels are numerous so if you want us to depart send for us five days' worth of supplies for you know that the road ahead of us is quite long and that we will not meet anything after you except strong forts with iron gates. If you supply us we will be able to reach one of the Syrian cities. As you have proposed we will first conquer some other city and then return. If you do this it will be beneficial to you.

He then folded the letter and gave it to the messenger who delivered it to the governor. The governor was pleased at the reply and after gathering all his officials and priests, said, "Know that the 'Arabs have sent a message requesting food and provisions so that they may depart from you. The 'Arabs are like a beast of prey which does not leave alone a prey it has found. Hunger has gripped them here and if we feed them they will leave you alone."

Romans : We fear that the 'Arabs will take the provisions and fodder but will not leave us.

Governor : We will obtain guarantees and promises that when you order them to depart they will obey.

Romans : Do what you feel to be correct, but extract from them the guarantees for you and for us.

The governor then called the priests and monks and ordered them to go to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ to obtain his word that the Muslims would leave when ordered to. They departed via the Rastan Gate. Upon meeting Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ they extracted promises from him to withdraw when ordered to and not to return until conquering a city of Syria, be it in the East or West or on the coast or in the mountains. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ replied, "I am pleased with those terms and conclude the treaty upon that."

48) Provisions and unexpected results

The people of Hims then took out of their stocks a massive quantity of provisions and fodder for the Muslims, enough to suffice them for five days. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ went

to them and said, "O people of Hims, we have accepted what you have brought us, but will you not sell us more?"

"We will certainly do that," replied the Romans.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ then announced to the Muslims, "Buy provisions and fodder and buy as much as possible, for ahead of you is a long road without provisions."

Muslims : With what will we buy provisions and how will we carry them?

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Whoever has anything with him of the booty acquired from the Romans should use it to buy provisions and fodder.

Hassân bin 'Adî al-Ghatfânî narrates:

May Allah lighten Abû 'Ubaydah's reckoning on the Day of Judgement just as he lightened the rugs and velvety carpets which burdened us and our animals. We exchanged these burdens for provisions and fodder from the people of Hims. The 'Arabs were so liberal in their buying and selling that the Romans would buy twenty dînâr worth of goods for a mere two dînâr. The Romans were happy that the 'Arabs were departing and grew greedy for these cheap purchases and so continuously purchased for three days.

The Romans had spies and informants in the Muslim army. When they saw that Hims had opened its gates and was supplying the Muslims they thought that Hims had surrendered. They therefore fled towards Antioch. Whenever they passed through a Roman city or fort they said, "Hims has peacefully surrendered to the 'Arabs."

Whoever heard this increased in fear and terror and this was a gift from Allâh to the Muslims. There were forty spies of whom three went to Shayzar and spread the news there.

49) Conquest with crates

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ took the army to ar-Rastan which he found to be heavily fortified and had an abundant supply of water. The city was filled with men and equipment. He sent a messenger demanding that they surrender. They refused and said, "We will not surrender until we see how the matter ends between you and Heraclius. Thereafter whatever happens, happens with the will of God."

He responded, "We are going to fight Heraclius. We are many men and are burdened with much baggage. We therefore want to leave it in trust with you until we return."

They went to their governor, Nikita, to consult him in that matter. He replied, "O people, kings and armies have always left their goods by us and that has never harmed us in any way." He then sent this message to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "We will fulfil whatever your need is but stipulate that you show full consideration to the people who reside in our rural districts."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : We will do that, Allâh willing.

Thâbit bin Qays bin 'Alqamah narrates:

I was with Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ at that time. He called those Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ whom he would consult with and said, "This is a strong, impregnable fort. We cannot conquer it except through some trick. I am sending about twenty of you in crates which will have the locks inside. Once the twenty are inside the city they will come out of the crates and attack. Verily they will be victorious against the Disbelievers who live in the city.

Khâlid ﷺ : If you have decided that, well and good. However, put fake locks on the outside to avoid suspicion but the lid should in reality be at the bottom without any restraints. Once they enter the city they should all spring out and attack together proclaiming, "Allâhu Akbar," for indeed this declaration has a deep connection with obtaining victory.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ accepted this and implemented this plan with crates of food received from the Romans. The first to enter a crate was Dirâr ﷺ followed by al-Musayyib bin Najîyah, Thul Kalâ' al-Himyarî, 'Amr bin Ma'dîkarab, al-Mirqâl, Hishâm bin Najîyah, Qays bin Hubayrah, 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr, Mâlik bin al-Ashtar, Awf bin Sâlim, Sâbir bin Kalkal, Mâzin bin 'Âmir, al-Asyad bin Salamah, Rabî'ah bin 'Âmir, 'Ikra'mah bin Abî Jahl, 'Utbah bin al-'Âs, Dârim bin Fayyâd al-'Absî, Salamah bin Habîb, al-Fâri' bin Harmalah, Nawfal bin Jar'al, Jundub bin Sayf and 'Abdullâh bin Ja'far who was appointed as commander.

The crates were delivered to the Romans. Once they were brought inside the city, Nikita had them stored in his palace. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ then left until he reached a town called, as-Sûdîyah. At night-fall he sent Khâlid ﷺ with the vanguard back to ar-Rastan to see what had befallen the Sahâbah ﷺ in the crates. When they reached the bridge they heard shouts of, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" coming from the city.

50) Conquest of ar-Rastan

After Nikita had placed them in the palace he left with his patricians for the chapel to render thanks for the 'Arabs leaving them without a fight. The Sahâbah ؓ could hear them reciting the Bible and emerged from the crates, bracing themselves. Unsheathing their weapons, they seized Nikita's wife and concubines and said, "We want the keys to the gates."

When she gave them the keys they raised cries of, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" and recited salutations upon Rasûlullâh ﷺ. The Romans were taken by surprise and did not come out against the Muslims because they were unprepared and unarmed. Ibn Ja'far ؓ sent Rabî'ah bin 'Âmir, al-Asyad bin Salamah, 'Ikramah bin Abî Jahl, 'Utbah bin al-'Âs and al-Fâri' bin Harmalah with the keys and said, "Open the gates and raise your voices with 'Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!' Your Muslim brethren are completely around the city."

The five went to the nearest gate, the Hims Gate, and opened it with cries of, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" They found themselves face-to-face with the vanguard under Khâlid ؓ who replied with, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" and entered the city.

When the Romans heard the shouts of the Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ they knew that they had been overcome and that the city was now out of their hands. They came to the Muslims to surrender saying, "We will not fight you. We are now your prisoners, so be just unto us for you are more beloved unto us than our own nation."

Khâlid ؓ presented them with Islâm. Many accepted but the majority preferred paying Jizyah. As for Nikita, he said, "I have no desire to change my religion."

Khâlid ؓ : Then leave with your family and tell your nation about our justice.

The Muslims expelled him from the city and he took his family and wealth with him to Hims, informing the people there of his city's conquest. Anxiety set in and they feared 'Arab raids against them.

Khâlid ؓ sent Ibn Ja'far ؓ to inform Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ of the victory. He fell into prostration to Allâh and sent a force of 1,000 men under Hilâl bin Murrah al-Yushkurî to garrison the city. After the garrisoning, Khâlid ؓ and Ibn Jafar ؓ departed for Hamâh. Shayzar had also surrendered, but upon the patrician's death Heraclius quickly appointed a new governor, Niks, a tyrant who severely oppressed the Shayzarîs and cancelled the treaty. He made life difficult for them, confiscated

their wealth and paid no attention to their needs, being too absorbed in his eating and drinking.

51) Rebellion in Shayzar

When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was informed of this he despatched a squadron of horsemen who raided Shayzar. A great tumult resulted. The governor came out of the fort and gathered all the leaders in the cathedral and said, "O people of Shayzar, you know that Caesar has appointed me over you to protect your city, wealth and women folk." He then opened the armoury and distributed the contents amongst them, ordering them to fight. In the meanwhile Khâlid ﷺ suddenly appeared with the vanguard followed by Yazîd bin Abî Sufyan ﷺ and then Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ with the rest of the army. The Romans were terrified and bewildered.

When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ saw them in this state he wrote the following letter :

> *In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*
>
> *O people of Shayzar! Your fort is no stronger than Ba'labakk nor ar-Rastan, nor are your men any braver. Once you have read my letter you should immediately surrender or else a great calamity will afflict you. You are already aware of our justice and good character so become like the other cities under our rule and surrender just as the rest of Syria has. Was-salâm.*

He folded the letter and gave it to one of the subject Disbelievers to deliver it to them. Once it was delivered and read to the governor he said, "What do you say, O people of Shayzar, with regard to what the 'Arabs say?"

Shayzarîs : O great patrician, the 'Arabs have spoken the truth. Our fort is not stronger than ar-Rastan, Ba'labakk, Damascus or Busrâ. You are well acquainted with the strength of Hims and the singular bravery, yet even they had to reach an agreement with the 'Arabs. So have the Palestinians and Jordanians with all their strongholds. So how can our little fort of Shayzar resist them? If you oppose the 'Arabs then you will be the cause of our destruction and our city's ruin.

They began a heated debate wherein Niks began to swear at the Shayzarîs and then ordered his men to beat them up. This infuriated them. They drew their weapons and

attacked him and his men. The Muslims became aware of this battle ensuing between the two Roman parties and said, "O Allâh, let them destroy themselves."

Eventually the citizens gained victory over their enemies and killed every one of them. They then deputed some unarmed men to meet Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. Standing in front of him, they greeted him and said, "O commander, we have killed our patrician out of love for you."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O people of Shayzar, may Allâh whiten your faces and shower your sustenance upon you. You have sufficed us for battle.

He then turned to the Muslims and said, "Do you not see how obedient these Romans are, what they did to their governor out of love for you and how they willingly come to obey you? I believe that some kind of reward is due to them."

Muslims : Yes, and how you treat them will spread to other places which might help our conquests if Allâh wills.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Glad tidings, O people of Shayzar. Whoever wishes to enter our Dîn without being forced to will receive the same rights and duties as we have and will be exempt from land-tax for two years. Whoever remains on his old religion will be exempt from land-tax for a full year but will still pay Jizyah.

Shazarîs (overjoyed) : O commander, we hear and obey. This is the palace of the patrician to which you are more entitled than him. We give it to you as a gift together with all the slaves, vessels and wealth it contains.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ took out the one-fifth share due to the State, divided the rest equally amongst the Muslims and said, "O Muslims, Allâh has conquered this city through you easily and effortlessly. On the other hand, Hims is rebellious towards you although you have fulfilled your obligations to them. So now let us go against them. May Allâh have mercy upon you."

52) The great Christian coalition

The Muslims mounted their horses intending to go, when they saw a cloud of dust rising from behind the river bend coming from the direction of the Antioch road and was widely spread out. The Muslims rushed towards it and found a high-ranking Roman cleric with 100 loaded Turkish horses and 100 guards. He did not know about the coming of the Muslims.

Khâlid ؓ called out, "Allâhu Akbar!" and the Muslims charged and surrounded them. They took the Christians prisoner and seized the Turkish horses. Khâlid ؓ went to the priest and said, "Woe unto you! From where have you brought this?"

The priest babbled something in Greek which Khâlid ؓ did not understand. A Shayzarî came and said, "O commander, he says that he is a senior cleric of Heraclius who sent him with this consignment to Herbius. These goods consist of red brocade woven with gold and ten loads of dînâr and the rest is either robes or dînâr."

The Muslims took the goods as booty which was of such a quantity that they had not obtained before.

Khâlid ؓ took the booty to Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ at Shayzar's river-bend. He was wrapped up in a cotton cloak and had his head similarly covered to protect himself from the heat of the sun. Khâlid ؓ made the priest stand in front of Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ who asked, "What is this, O Abû Sulaymân?"

Khâlid ؓ : They have brought gifts from Antioch from Heraclius to Herbius, governor of Hims.

He presented Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ with the booty. He was very pleased and exclaimed, "O Abû Sulaymân, the conquest of Shayzar has resulted in many blessings." He then asked the translator who was constantly with him, "Ask them about the tyrant, Heraclius Caesar. Has he gathered a large army around him or not?"

The translator and the priest spoke for a while. The priest said, "Tell your commander that Caesar has been informed of your conquests of Damascus, Ba'labakk and Jûsîyah and that you have not yet overcome Hims. He therefore sent me with these gifts for Herbius, governor of Hims and ordered him to resist you for he is sending reinforcements to him. Caesar had requested reinforcements from all who worship the Cross and read the Bible. He has received positive responses from the Romans, Slavs, Franks, Armenians, Mongols, the Georgians, the Duqas, Greeks, the 'Alf, the Gharanah, Italians and whoever carries the cross. These armies have already reached Heraclius from every direction."

When this was translated for Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ he became anxious, but still offered the priest Islâm. The priest told the translator, "Tell him that last night I saw Rasûlullâh ﷺ in a dream and have already embraced Islâm at his hands." Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ was delighted and offered the guards Islâm. Upon their refusal he had them beheaded.

53) Return to Hims

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ then headed for Hims. A detachment of cavalry formed his vanguard. They began raiding the Romans of Hims who fled to the city, locked the gates and said, "By Christ! The 'Arabs have deceived us." The Muslims sealed Hims off from all directions. Her provisions had been spent and most of the inhabitants had gone to trade and to acquire provisions and were thus spread out in the lands.

Upon reaching Hims, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ ordered the slaves and freed-slaves to spread out in all the roads and check-points, and said to them, "Bring me whoever you find returning to Hims with provisions or merchandise." They obeyed him and this made life difficult for Herbius. He therefore wrote the following letter to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ:

"O 'Arabs! We did not know that you are deceptive and break your word. Did you not agree to leave us in exchange for provisions? You then sought to trade with us which we happily agreed to, so why have you now broken our agreement?"

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ wrote back:

"I want you to send to me those priests and monks you had previously sent so that I can establish what terms I agreed to and then they can prove to you that we had not deceived you nor had we broken our word, for people like us do not do that, Allâh willing."

After reading the letter, Herbius sent the priests and monks to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. They greeted him and sat down in front of him.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Do you not know that I had made an agreement with you and promised to leave you until I conquer one of the cities of Syria, be it on the coast or in the mountains? Thereafter I would have a choice of whether I want to return to you or go elsewhere.

Romans : By Christ! Certainly.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Allâh has conquered for us ar-Rastan and Shayzar in the shortest span of time. He has granted us the booty of the patrician Niks and more besides that which we could not have hoped to acquire in such a short while. So now you have no promise to hold against us and there is no longer any peace except that you surrender your city and accept our rule and protection.

Romans : You have spoken the truth. There is no blame against you. We have heard of your conquests and the fault lies with us for making such an agreement in the first place. The matter now rests with our governor to whom we shall report.

They then returned to Hims. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called his warriors and said, "Get your gear for these people are without any provision and cannot receive immediate help from Heraclius. So seek help from Allâh and place your reliance on Him."

The Muslims collected their weapons and gear and returned to the gates and walls of Hims.

54) Hims resists

The Romans went to the governor and said, "What should we do about the 'Arabs?"

Governor : We should fight them and should not show them any weakness.

Romans : Our provisions are gone. They took them. We have never heard of such a trick before.

Governor : Why are you acting so helpless towards them? They have not killed or wounded a single one of you. Besides their raids, no difficulty or hunger has afflicted you. Even if they should reach the city they will not be able to overcome you. A few men on the wall will be able to hold them off for you. As for provisions I have enough in my palace to support many of you for a long period. Caesar will not neglect you. News of your condition will soon reach him and he will despatch armies to help you.

The governor had an enormous pit in his palace filled with food. He began distributing it to them all, high or low, for the remainder of the day and so they calmed down. All the people of Hims were in straitened conditions so half of the stock was distributed on the first day. The governor then said, "Be satisfied for three days with what I have given you and go and fight your enemy." When they got their battle-gear he selected 5,000 unequalled descendants of al-Zarâwiz and al-'Amâliqah including 1,000 of the royal Madbajah family. He opened the armoury of his grandfather, Sergius, and distributed armour, shields, helmets, head-gear, bows, arrows and spears. He encouraged them to fight and promised them reinforcements from Heraclius. He then called the priests and monks and said to them, "Make your preparations and pray unto Christ to help us against the 'Arabs. There is no barrier against your supplications, nor will you be rejected." They entered the Great Cathedral of Sergius - which is today the Jâmi' Masjid - and began singing psalms,

shedding tears and uttering their words of Disbelief. In that manner they spent the whole night.

In the morning the governor entered the Cathedral and performed the sacrifice and Prayer of the Dead. He returned to his palace where he was presented with roast pork. He ate all of it then drank wine from a gold and silver vessel until his eyes turned in his skull. He then dressed in brocade with fur trimmed edges. Thereafter he put on small double chain-mail. On top of that he donned armour made of red gold and hung a cross studded with sapphire around his neck and an Indian sword at his waist. A huge mountainous-like stallion was brought. He mounted it and left his palace, heading for Rastan Gate. His men came and surrounded him from all sides.

55) Battle of Hims

The gates of Hims were opened and the Romans emerged with all their numbers, equipment, flags and crosses. In front of Herbius were 5,000 horsemen wearing layered chain-mail. He arranged them in rows in front of the city as if they were an iron wall or a solid rock. They were ready to die and give up their wealth and children.

The Muslims advanced like a swarm of locusts and launched a heavy attack against them, but they stayed firm like rocks, not moving and not bothering with what befell them. The governor then shouted out so they advanced, shouting at each other. The Muslims mounted their horses, attacked and shot arrows at them. The two armies became intertwined, fighting most intensely. The Muslims turned back in defeat with many dead or wounded.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was grieved to see the Muslims being defeated and called out, "O children of the Qurân, return! Return! May Allâh bless you." The Muslims returned to fight and attacked the Christians most violently. Khalid ﷺ led a large contingent of Banû Makhzûm in an attack in which they hacked the enemy with swords and pierced them with spears, grinding them like wheat is ground into flour. The Muslims thus worked their swords amongst the Romans.

Ibn Masrûq al-'Absî led his tribe, Banû 'Abs, in an attack, all the while reciting, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" They beat the Romans so badly that they began retreating to the wall after suffering many deaths. There they began babbling in Greek and returned once again against the Muslims. They surrounded the Muslims from all sides and shot arrows at them and pierced them with spears. The Muslims were in grave danger.

When Khâlid ؓ, who was the flag-bearer at the Battle of Hims saw this, he charged ahead with the flag and called out to his men, "Intensify your attacks against them. May Allâh bless you. Herein lies benefit for your world and your hereafter." While Khâlid ؓ was encouraging his men, a high-ranking general with formidable upper-body armour attacked him, roaring like a lion. Khâlid ؓ aimed his sword at the general's head but hit his helmet instead. His blade snapped off and went flying in the air leaving Khâlid ؓ holding a mere handle. The Roman saw this and entertained hopes against him. They tackled each other, shoulder-to-shoulder and arm-to-arm until Khâlid ؓ began hugging his chest and then squeezed with all his might until he snapped the Roman's ribs and twisted them into each other. He then flung him down dead. Taking the Roman's sword, he cut off his head and waved the sword until sparks flew and put the head on his saddle bow. Then shouting at Banû Makhzûm, he led them in another heavy attack at the Roman centre, scattering them left and right and loudly saying, "I am the valiant horseman Khâlid bin al-Walîd, the Sahâbî of Rasûlullâh ﷺ."

The battle continued with unequalled intensity until midday. Khâlid's ؓ armour grew too hot for him so he withdrew from the battle. Banû Makhzûm followed him. Blood filled their armour and flowed over their arms until it appeared purple. Khâlid ؓ, at the front, recited this poem:

ويل لجمع الروم من يوم شغب   إني رأيت الحرب فيه تلتهب
وكم لقوا منا مواقع النصب   وكم تركت الروم في حال العطب

Woe to the hordes of Rome on the day of fighting
Indeed I see war in it blazing.
How many times have they met from us occasions of exhaution
How many times have I left the Romans in destruction.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ called out, "Praise be to Allah, O Abû Sulaymân, praise be to Allah! You have waged Jihâd for the sake of Allâh as it should be waged."

56) Martyrdom of 'Ikramah ؓ

Al-Mirqâl bin Hishâm noticed some negligence on the part of the Romans. He called out to Banû Zuhrah and attacked the Roman right flank while Maysarah bin Masrûq al-'Absî took Banû 'Abs to fight their left flank. 'Ikramah bin Abi Jahl ؓ together

with a large group of Banû Makhzûm attacked the Romans. The other Muslims, now convinced of victory, also attacked .

None fought more fiercely and violently at the Battle of Hims than Banû Makhzûm. Amongst them 'Ikramah bin 'Abî Jahl ؓ fought most fiercely and led the attack. He took on many Romans all on his own. Someone said to him, "Fear Allâh and have compassion on yourself."

'Ikramah ؓ responded, "O people, I used to fight on behalf of idols whereas today I am fighting in obedience to the All-Knowing King. I already see the virgin damsels of Paradise desiring me. Were one of them to appear before the people of the world they would no longer need the sun and moon. Rasûlullâh ﷺ was indeed true in what he promised us."

He then unsheathed his sword and plunged into the Romans continuously penetrating into their ranks until they were utterly bewildered at his steadfastness and fighting prowess. The governor himself came to fight him. In his hand he carried a huge glittering spear which he brandished in his hand and thrust into'Ikramah's ؓ heart until it penetrated right out of his back. He collapsed on the ground and Allâh hastened his soul to Paradise. When Khâlid ؓ saw his cousin in that state he rushed to him. Standing over him he wept, saying, "If only 'Umar bin al-Khattâb could see my cousin lying like this he would know that we mount spear-points like other people mount horses."

The terrifying scenes of the battle continued until night-fall. The Romans then returned to Hims, locked the gates and kept watch from the city walls. The Muslims returned to their camp and also kept watch.

57) Khâlid's ؓ plan

In the morning Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ called out, "O Muslims, what is stopping you from going against these people? You had hopes of defeating them but they defeated you and you fear them. Allâh had given you great ease and peace and made you victorious against the generals of Rome and conquered forts and castles for you. What is this weakness now? Beware! Allâh is watching you."

Khâlid ؓ : These Roman horsemen are the strongest of warriors. There are no lowly ones or cowards amongst them. You also know that they are more inspired to defend their children and women.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Then what is your view, O Abû Sulaymân? May Allâh have mercy on you.

Khâlid ﷺ : We should withdraw from here leaving our sheep and camels behind. They will certainly come after us, but once we are far from their city we can stab with spears all those who have come to chase us and hack their backs with swords for they will be far away from the safety of their city.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : You have given a good suggestion, O Abû Sulaymân.

It was established amongst the Muslims that they would retreat and leave behind their animals. The Romans came pouring out of all the gates of Hims looking forward to the battle. The 'Arabs asked for a cease-fire and pretended to be weak and afraid. The Roman hopes grew and they refrained from attacking until later in the morning when the sun was fully out, thinking it to be a good time to attack. The 'Arabs retreated leaving behind their sheep.

Nawfal bin 'Âmir narrates from 'Arfajah bin Mâjid at-Tamîmî who narrates from Surâqah an-Nakha'î who had participated in the Battle of Hims:

The governor and his 5,000 elite warriors pursued the retreating 'Arabs. We retreated as if we were fleeing for az-Zurâ'ah and Jûsîyah. The governor reached us, but some of his men had gone, distracted by our goods which we had left behind.

There lived in Hims an aged priest .The Romans greatly respected him. He was very experienced in worldly matters and knew all about trickery and deception. He was a scholar of the Torah, the Bible, the Psalms of David (Dâwûd ﷺ), the Psalms of Solomon (Sulaymân ﷺ), the Scriptures of Abraham (Ibrâhîm ﷺ) and the Scriptures of Seth (Shîth ﷺ). He had even been blessed with meeting disciples of Jesus son of Mary ('Îsâ ﷺ). When he saw the 'Arabs retreating and the Romans seizing their goods, he shouted out, "By Christ! It is a trick, a deception, a scheme of the 'Arabs. 'Arabs will never abandon their children and camels even if it means that they will be killed to the last man."

The priest screamed while the Romans plundered, not bothering about anything except the looted goods and food.

The governor and his 5,000 men were in the meantime pressing on with the chase. Once the Romans were quite far from Hims Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ shouted, "Attack the Romans like beasts of prey and hunting eagles."

The Muslims turned back as one man and surrounded the governor and his men on all sides. Their encirclement was so complete as the white of the eye surrounds the pupil. The Romans were now like a black dot on a white ox and began firing their arrows at the Muslims. The Muslims pounced on them like hunting lions and swooped upon them like eagles. They began hacking at them with their swords right and left until the majority of Romans lay dead.

58) The governor is killed

'Atiyah bin Fihr az-Zubaydî narrates:

When the Romans saw what we were doing to them, they assailed us. As the battle heated Khâlid ﷺ appeared in the middle of the army mounted on a reddish horse and wearing golden armour which the governor of Ba'labakk had gifted to him the day Ba'labakk was conquered. He was also wearing the red turban which he always wore in battle. Roaring like a lion he brandished his sword until sparks flew and shouted, "May Allâh have mercy on that man whose sword is naked, whose resolution is strong and who fights his enemies." The Muslims responded by unsheathing their swords and violently assaulting the enemy.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called out, "O sons of 'Arabs, defend your women, Dîn and wealth. Allâh is watching you and is your Helper against your enemy." Mu'âth bin Jabal ﷺ had separated with 500 men returning to the abandoned camp. The looting Christians were so busy carrying off provisions, baggage and goods that they did not perceive the coming of the Muslims and before they knew it were being pierced with spears like tongues of a kindled fire. The announcer called out, "O 'Arab youth, get to the gate before they get away with our goods and children!"

The Romans were weighed down with their plunder but once they saw Mu'âth ﷺ attacking them they threw down everything in order to escape. Some were killed and others escaped.

Suhayb bin Sayf al-Fazârî narrates:

By Allâh! Only about 100 horsemen out of the 5,000 with the governor of Hims managed to escape us. We chased the enemy to the gates and when we massacred them that was the greatest disaster to befall Hims because most of the refugees from al-'Awasim and other places were inside the city *(so those killed at the gates would be people of Hims - translator's note).*

Sa'îd bin Zayd narrates:

I participated in the Battle of Hims and was fond of keeping track of death-tolls. I counted 5,060 dead besides wounded and prisoners. I went to Abû 'Ubaydah and said, "Good news! I have counted 5,060 dead besides wounded and prisoners."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : That is indeed good news. Do you have any news on whether the governor has been killed?

Sa'îd ﷺ : I killed him.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ: How do you know that it was him whom you killed?

Sa'îd ﷺ : I saw a heavily-built, obese, tall, reddish-coloured horseman with a sword in his hand. He was wearing upper-body armour and also had a spear. He was in the centre of the Romans and bellowed like a camel. I attacked him saying, "O Allâh, I put Your power ahead of mine and Your conquering ahead of mine. O Allâh, grant his slaying to be at my hands and grant me its reward."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Did you loot his corpse?

Sa'îd ﷺ : No, but my sign is in him - an arrow from my quiver which I shot into his heart. He then fell off his horse and his men fled. I went to him and cut him in the groin with my sword and left the arrow in his heart.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O Muslims, go and get what is on his corpse and give it to Sa'îd. May Allâh have mercy on you.

They obeyed him.

59) Hims surrenders

Upon the termination of the battle the Muslims gathered all the booty, armour and Turkish horses and presented it to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. He took out the state's one-fifth share and divided the rest amongst the Mujâhidîn. The people of Hims mourned their dead, filling the city with shouts and wails. Their elders and leaders gathered in the cathedral and discussed with the priests and monks whether they should surrender or not.

The priests and leaders set out to meet Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and surrendered. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ granted them indemnity and said, "I will not enter your city until we see the outcome between us and Heraclius." The Romans offered to entertain the

Muslims in the city, but Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ forbade them and not a single Muslim entered Hims until after the Battle of al-Yarmûk. Such conduct of justice and good character drew the Roman populace closer to the Muslims.

Jarîr bin Awf narrates from Humayd at-Tawîl who narrates from Sinân ar-Râshid al-Yarbû'î who narrates from Salamah bin Jurayj who narrates from an-Najjâr who is knowledgable on the conquests of Syria:

After the people of Hims surrendered to us following the killing of Herbius they went out to bury their dead. We also began searching for the martyrs from amongst the Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and found them to be 235 horsemen. All of them were from Himyar and Hamdân except thirty Makkîs, including 'Ikramah bin Abî Jahl, Sâbir bin Jarî, ar-Rayyis bin 'Aqîl, Marwân bin 'Âmir as-Sulamî – who was the son of the paternal uncle of al-'Abbâs, Jamh bin Qudum and Jâbir bin Khuwaylid ar-Raba'î.

Part 3

Al - Yarmûk

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Part 3:
Yarmuk

1) The Christian armies arrive in Syria

Heraclius could hardly breathe out of shock when he heard that the Muslims had conquered Hims, ar-Rastan and Shayzar and had seized all the gifts he had sent for Herbius. He now awaited the arrival of the armies from the ends of the Roman Empire. He had written to all Christians asking them to come to his aid. Within a short while they started arriving. So numerous were they that the vanguard was with him at Antioch while the rear stretched out to Great Rûmîyah. He sent an army to Caesarea on the Syrian coast to defend Acre and Tiberias. He sent another to Baytul Muqaddas while he awaited the arrival of the army of Bannes, King of Armenia.

Bannes had raised an army in Armenia which surpassed all that which the other nations of the Empire had gathered. Bannes arrived with all his officials to meet Heraclius. When they neared the town they dismounted and went on foot out of respect for Heraclius.They began uttering words of Disbelief, weeping and mourning over the territories lost to the Muslims.

Heraclius stopped them and said, "O followers of Christianity, O sons of Holy Water, I had warned you about these 'Arabs but none of you accepted my words. By Christ! By the True Bible! By the Communion! By the Baptism! These 'Arabs will definitely rule the ground beneath my throne! Crying is inappropriate except for women. Such an army has gathered which no king on the face of the Earth can oppose. I have spent my wealth and manpower to defend you, your religion and your women. Repent unto Christ for all your sins. Do only good unto our subjects and do not oppress them. Be patient in battle and do not fight each other. Beware of vanity and jealousy for when these two qualities descend upon a nation they end up helpless (against their enemies). I now have a question to which you must respond."

So the Roman leaders and princes said, "Ask whatever you want to, O Caesar."

Heraclius : You are today better equipped and have more support than the 'Arabs. You have more men and tents and power than them. So why is it that you are being defeated whereas the Persians, Turks and Jarâmiqah feared your fighting powers.

Every time they come against you they returned defeated. Now, the 'Arabs have defeated you although they are the weakest of all creation.

Their bodies are naked and their stomachs hungry. They have neither gear nor weapons. Yet they still defeated you at Busrâ, Hawrân, Ajnâdayn, Damascus, Ba'labakk and Hims.

2) The Secret of Success

The Romans all remained speechless. Eventually an old priest who was deeply learned in Christianity stood up and said, "O Caesar, do you know why the 'Arabs have been able to conquer?"

Heraclius : By Christ, no.

Priest : O Caesar, because our nation has changed its religion and has innovated it. They dispute about Jesus Christ and oppress one another. There are none amongst them who order the good and forbid the bad. There is no trace amongst them of justice, goodness and obedience. They ruin the times of prayer, consume interest, fornicate and commit adultery. Every sin and shameless act has become common amongst them. On the other hand, these 'Arabs obey their Lord and follow their religion. They worship at night and fast during the day. They never fail to remember their Lord nor to convey salutations upon their Prophet. Oppression and transgression is not to be found amongst them. They are not arrogant against each other. They distinguish themselves with their honesty and absorb themselves in worship. If they attack us they do not leave. If we attack them they do not flee. They know that this world is only temporary and that the life to come is eternal.

Heraclius : By Christ! You have spoken the truth. Most certainly this is why the 'Arabs are victorious against us. When our people behave as you have described then what argument do we have against their victories? I have now resolved to send these armies back to their homelands and I will take my family and wealth and go to Constantinople, for there I will be safe from the 'Arabs.

Romans (standing in rows before him) : O Caesar, do not do this. Do not abandon the religion of Christ for he will take you to task for that on the Day of Judgement. All the kings will mock you and take you to be weak. Our enemies will be so delighted that you have left the Paradise of Syria to be inhabited by the 'Arabs after us. Such an army has been gathered here for us the like of which has never been gathered for any other king in the world. We will confront the 'Arabs and persevere in fighting

them. Perhaps Christ will help us against them. Be resolute and appoint whom you will and leave us to fight the 'Arabs.

3) Heraclius appoints his generals

Heraclius was happy with their reply and resolved to send the army with five different kings of the Empire. He called for a brocade flag woven with red gold at the top of which was a jewelled cross. He gave it to Canter, King of North Europe, and put him in charge of 100,000 slaves and other horsemen. He also granted him a robe of honour, crown, belt and arm-band.

(Translator's note: Names of Greeks and foreign nations and places have proven very difficult to translate and have often been left in the 'Arabic form. The Rus were ancient Vikings, not the Russians of today but the Vikings were not Christian at that time, so I have translated "Rûsîyah" as "Northern Europe.")

The second flag was of white brocade with a golden sun embroidered in the middle. At the tip of the flag was a cross made of emerald. He gave it to George, governor of Amorium and Malûrîyah. He also granted him a robe, arm-belt and belt and put him in command of 100,000 horsemen of all the different nations of the Empire. The third flag was of coloured "dastari" cloth with a picture of a gold cross on it. It was handed over to Trajan, governor of Constantinople, and he was charged with over 100,000 Mongols, Franks and the Qaln. He was also given a robe, belt and bracelet. The fourth flag was of black brocade. Heraclius gave it to Theodorus and appointed him over another 100,000 of the Mongols and Armenians. The fifth flag was studded with pearls and jewels. Its handle was of gold with a ruby cross on top. Heraclius handed this over to Bannes, King of Armenia, whom he dearly loved because of his bravery and cunning. He had fought the Persians and the Turks many times and had always defeated them. Upon giving him the flag Heraclius took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to him with a belt, arm-belt, crown and a chain which was only permissible for the Emperors to wear.

Heraclius then said, "O Bannes, I appoint you commander-in-chief of the entire army. Your word and order will reign supreme."

Then he turned to the first four and said, "Your Crosses are under his Cross. He has full authority over you, so do not do anything without his consultation. Seek out the 'Arabs wherever they may be and do not be weak-hearted. Defend your ancient faith and just divine laws. Spread out and take four separate roads for if you all go together the land will not be able to sustain such a huge army and you will destroy the land

and whoever is in it." He then bestowed a robe on Jabalah bin al-Ayham al-Ghassâni and appointed him over the Christian 'Arabs of Ghassân, Lakhm and Juthâm. He said to him, "You 'Arabs will form the vanguard, for it takes like to destroy like. Only iron cuts iron."

He then ordered the priests to throw Holy Water over them, recite the Bible and pray the Death Prayer over them.

4) Narrations on the number of Romans

Nawfal bin 'Adî narrates from Surâqah bin Khâlid ﷺ who narrates from Qâsim - the freed slave of Hishâm bin 'Amr bin 'Utbah - who had participated in all the Syrian conquests:

The total number which Heraclius dispatched to al-Yarmûk was 600,000. These were from all the different nations who worship the Cross.

Jarîr bin 'Abdillâh narrates from Yûnus bin 'Abdil A'la:

The total sent to al-Yarmûk, excluding the Antioch army, numbered 700,000 horsemen.

Râshid bin Sa'îd al-Himyarî narrates:

I participated in the Battle of al-Yarmûk from the beginning to the end. When the Roman armies arrived, I climbed up an elevation and counted twenty flags. Once the Romans encamped, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ sent Romanus, the governor of Busrâ, to ascertain their numbers. He disguised himself and was absent from us one day and night before returning to us. When we saw him we gathered around him while Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ questioned him.

Romanus : I have heard them saying that they number one million, but I do not know if they were just saying that so that any spy overhearing them would convey incorrect information.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : How many men do you estimate to be under each banner?

Romanus : I estimate that there are 50,000 horsemen under each banner.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Allâhu Akbar! Receive glad-tidings of Allâh's help.

....كَم مِّن فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً
بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ مَعَ ٱلصَّـٰبِرِينَ

How many a small group defeated a huge force with Allâh's leave? And Allâh is with the patient ones. [2:249]

5) Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ is informed

Having appointed the King of Armenia as commander-in-chief of the armies and instructed him to fight the Muslims, Heraclius mounted his horse. The Romans then mounted their horses and blew their trumpets. Heraclius went out of the Persia Gate, following and advising the army. He said to the four generals, "Each of you should take a separate road and each of you will separately command his army. Once you meet the 'Arabs then Bannes is in supreme command. Realise that this is the one and only golden opportunity against them. If they defeat you they will not be satisfied with only these lands, but will pursue you wherever you go. They will not be satisfied with only wealth without taking your lives. They will enslave your women and children. So be patient in battle and aid your faith and the divine law."

Canter was sent via the Jabalah and al-Lâthîqîyah road; George via the road of Great Jâdah which is in 'Irâq; Theodorus via the Aleppo and Hamâh Road and Trajan via al-'Awâsim. Bannes followed with his army and sent men ahead of him to smooth the road and remove the stones. Jabalah headed Bannes's vanguard, consisting of the Christian 'Arabs of Ghassân, Lakhm and Juthâm. The Romans oppressed every town and city they passed through, demanding fodder and accommodation which the people were unable to present. The people cursed the soldiers, "May God not return you safely."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had spies in the Roman army at the time the tyrant Heraclius despatched his forces against the Muslims. These spies were from the Disbelievers under Muslim rule and would supply Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ with information. When the Romans reached Shayzar, the spies separated themselves and made for the Muslim camp at Hims. They found nobody there and upon enquiry were told that Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had departed leaving local leaders to collect the land-tax. The spies continued their travels until they met Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ at al-Jâbiyah where they informed him of the superiority of the Christian army. He was shocked and said,

"There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty."

He anxiously spent the night not closing an eye out of fear of what would happen to the Muslims. At dawn the athân was proclaimed and he led the Muslims in Salâtul Fajr. After the Salâh he made the Muslims promise not to leave until they had heard what he had to say. He then stood up to address them. After praising Allâh Most High, mentioning the Holy Prophet ﷺ, invoking mercy upon Abû Bakr ؓ and making du'â for victory for the Muslims, he said, "O Muslims, may Allâh have mercy upon you. Know that Allâh is to test you with a great test to see what you will do. It should also be considered that He has already fulfilled His promises unto you and granted you victory in many places. My spies have told me that the enemy of Allâh, Heraclius, has sought reinforcements from the leaders of the lands of Polytheism. He is now sending them against you and has heavily equipped and armed them.

يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِـُٔوا۟ نُورَ ٱللَّهِ بِأَفْوَٰهِهِمْ

وَٱللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِۦ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ ٱلْكَـٰفِرُونَ

They desire to extinguish Allâh's light with their mouths, but
Allâh will complete His light even if the Disbelievers dislike it.
[61:8]

Know that they are coming against you from different roads. The tyrant has ordered them to unite against you. Know that Allâh is with you. Those whom Allâh abandons are not many while those whom Allâh is with are not few. What is your opinion? May Allâh have mercy upon you."

6) Sahâbah ؓ consult

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ told one of the spies, "Stand up and tell the Muslims what you saw."

The spy told them of the army's great numbers, preparations and equipment. The Muslims became anxious and fear entered their hearts. They looked at each other without saying anything. Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ exclaimed, "What is this silence to my

question? May Allâh have mercy upon you. Present your opinions for indeed Allâh has said to his Prophet Muhammad ﷺ:

وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِى ٱلْأَمْرِ ۖ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ

And consult them in the affair. Then when you have decided, place your trust in Allâh. [3:159]

One of the earliest Muslims said, "O commander, you are a man of high status about whom a verse of the Qurân was revealed. You are the one whom Rasûlullâh ﷺ declared to be the Trustworthy One of this Ummah. He had said, 'Every ummah has a trustworthy one and the Trustworthy One of this Ummah is Abû 'Ubaydah 'Âmir bin al-Jarrâh.' So now you tell us what to do that will be beneficial to the Muslims."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : I am but a man like yourselves. You speak and I speak. You give opinions and I give mine. Allâh is the One who guides.

Yamanî man : We advise you to leave this place and go to Wâdî al-Qurâ which is close to al-Madînah. We can then receive reinforcements from 'Umar. When the enemy come against us we will be victorious against them.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : All of you sit down. May Allâh have mercy upon you. You have submitted your views, but were I to move from here 'Umar would dislike it and rebuke me, "You have abandoned those cities which Allâh has conquered through you and withdrawn from there. That is defeatism on your part." Submit other opinions to me. May Allâh have mercy upon you.

Qays bin Hubayrah : May Allâh not return us safely to our families if we abandon Syria. How can we leave all these gushing rivers, farmlands, grapevines, gold, silver and brocade and return to the famine and drought of al-Hijâz? There we will eat barley-bread and wear wool whereas we have such abundance here. If we are killed, then what of it? We are promised Jannah and will be in luxury which cannot be compared to this world.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : He has spoken the truth. By Allâh! Qays bin Hubayrah has uttered the truth. O Muslims, will you return to al-Hijâz and al-Madînah and leave for the Christians all these palaces, forts, gardens, rivers, food, drink, gold and silver, although of course what food is with Allâh in the Eternal Abode is much better. Qays bin

Hubayrah has spoken the truth to us. We will not abandon this place until Allâh passes His decision. He is the best of Deciders.

Qays bin Hubayrah : O commander, may Allâh make your words true too and help you in your governorship. Do not move from your position but place your trust in Allâh and fight the enemies of Allâh. Even if we do not gain a speedy victory, our reward, although delayed until the next life, will not be lost.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : May Allâh thank you and forgive us and you as well. Your view is the correct view.

7) March on al-Yarmûk

The other Muslims then gave their opinions except Khâlid ﷺ who remained silent. So Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ addressed him, "O Abû Sulaymân, you are a brave man and a bold horseman. You have excellent views and are resolute, what do you say about what Qays has said?"

Khâlid ﷺ : Qays has presented an excellent idea, but I do not agree. However, I will not oppose that which the Muslims have agreed upon.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : If you have an idea which is beneficial then tell us and we will follow what you say.

Khâlid ﷺ : O commander, if you stay here you will only be making yourself a target. This land is close to Caesarea where Constantine, the son of Heraclius, is stationed with 40,000 horsemen in addition to the Jordanians who have fled from you. I advise you to leave this place for al-Yarmûk where you can speedily receive reinforcements from the Commander of the Believers, 'Umar bin al-Khattâb. You will be in a good position to gain victory for it is a land spacious for our horses.

Muslims : Yes, what Khâlid ﷺ says is correct.

Abû Sufyân bin Harb ﷺ : O commander, first send Khâlid ﷺ with his men to the area around ar-Ramâdah to form a barrier between us and them. During our march a great tumult will be heard in the forest and we will be in a difficult position if the Romans hear us and attack. However, if they do attack, Khâlid ﷺ will be there to meet them with his men.

Khâlid ﷺ : By Allâh! O Ibn Harb, you have mentioned what is in my heart.

Abû ‘Ubaydah ؓ then gave orders to evacuate al-Jâbiyah. He called Khâlid ؓ and ordered him to take the army he had brought with him from ‘Iraq – which numbered 4,000 that day - and formed the vanguard to protect the Muslims. The Muslims made such a din which could be heard from a distance of two Farsakhs (11 km). As they headed towards al-Yarmûk, the Romans at the Jordan River heard the noise and thought that the Muslims were fleeing back to al-Hijâz out of fear of Heraclius’s army. They therefore advanced against the Muslims.

Khâlid ؓ confronted them and called out to his men, “Attack these people. You will be victorious.”

The Muslims unsheathed their swords and pointed their spears. Khâlid ؓ, Dirâr ؓ, al-Mirqâl, Talhah bin Nawfal al-‘Âmirî, Zâhid bin al-Asad, ‘Âmir bin at-Tufayl ؓ, Ibn Akkâl ad-Dam and other warriors attacked the enemy. The Romans were unable to resist and fled with the Muslims either killing or capturing them. When the fleeing Christians reached the Jordan River, many of them drowned therein. Khâlid ؓ then returned.

As for Abû ‘Ubaydah ؓ he reached al-Yarmûk leaving the transport at the back and placed the women and children on a nearby hill. Guards were stationed on all the roads. When Khâlid ؓ arrived with the prisoners and booty Abû ‘Ubaydah ؓ delightedly exclaimed, “May Allâh have mercy! This is definitely a sign of Allâh’s help and victory to come.”

The Muslims remained at al-Yarmûk preparing for battle and the promised arrival of the enemy.

When Constantine, son of Heraclius, heard of the arrival of the Islâmic army at al-Yarmûk and the slow march of the Roman generals against the Muslims he sent a message to the generals berating them for their slowness. When the messenger reached Bannes he called all the princes and generals and read the letter out to them and ordered them to march on. Thus they marched on. They oppressed the people of every town they passed through, which had been conquered by the Muslims and said to the locals, “Woe unto you! You abandoned your co-religionists and community and went towards the ‘Arabs.”

“You are more blameworthy than us,” retorted the locals, “for you ran away in defeat forcing us to surrender in order to save ourselves.”

The soldiers recognised the validity of this accusation and remained silent.

8) Arrival at al-Yarmûk

The Romans continued their march towards al-Yarmûk until they arrived at the Mountain Monastery near ar-Ramâdah and al-Jûlân. They kept a distance of three Farsakh (16.5 km) away from the Muslims. Once all their forces had arrived, the first division moved in the direction of the Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. Jabalah bin al-Ayham was leading the vanguard consisting of 60,000 Christian 'Arabs of Ghassân, Lakhm and Juthâm. They were Bannes's vanguard. When the Sahâbah ؓ saw the great multitude they exclaimed, "There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through Allâh, Most High, Most Mighty."

'Atîyah bin 'Âmir narrates:

By Allâh! The only way I can describe the number of Romans is like a mighty swarm of locusts. They covered the entire valley. I saw the Muslims in great anxiety continuously reciting, "There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good and except through Allâh, The Most High, the Most Mighty."

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ was reciting,

رَبَّنَآ أَفۡرِغۡ عَلَيۡنَا صَبۡرٗا وَثَبِّتۡ أَقۡدَامَنَا
وَٱنصُرۡنَا عَلَى ٱلۡقَوۡمِ ٱلۡكَٰفِرِينَ

O our Rabb! Pour patience upon us! Make our feet firm and help us against the Disbelieving nation! [2:250]

The Muslims fetched their gear and Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ called those Disbelieving spies serving him and ordered them to enter the Roman army and spy on the number of their soldiers, equipment and weapons. He said, "I hope that Allâh will grant it all to us as booty."

Bannes remained facing the Muslims for several days without any fighting. He had refrained from attacking because a messenger arrived from Caesar saying, "Do not attack the Muslims until we send an envoy to them promising a great annual amount and gifts for their leader, 'Umar bin al-Khattâb, and all their chiefs. They may keep all the territory from al-Jâbiyah to al-Hijâz."

Bannes : It is absolutely preposterous that they will ever accept that.

Prince George : How can you object against Caesar's suggestion?

King Bannes : Then you can go to them yourself. Call for an intelligent man from amongst them and suggest this offer to him. Make great effort in your mission.

George dressed in brocade, tied a jewelled band around his head and mounted a tall grey horse with a golden saddle inlaid with pearls and jewels. 1,000 horsemen of Madbajah accompanied him to the Muslim camp. When they came near he halted them and carried on alone calling out, "O 'Arabs, I am an envoy of King Bannes. Let your commander come out so that we may present some peace proposals which might save us from shedding each other's blood."

The Muslims went to inform Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who went out. He was wearing white 'Iraqi cotton fabric and a black turban and had his sword girdled. He rode on his horse until its neck met the neck of George's horse. Everybody was watching them.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O Disbelieving brother, say what you have got to say and ask what you have got to ask.

George : O 'Arabs, you should not be deceived into saying, "We have defeated the armies of Rome in many places. We have conquered their lands and are supreme in most of the territories." Look now at what kind of an army has come against you. We have with us all various nations. We have sworn not to flee even if it means that all of us will be killed. You do not have power against all these legions you see. Return to your lands for you have reached the maximum limit of what you can conquer of Caesar's Empire. Our Caesar is so generous that he is prepared to gift you the area you have taken in the past three years. You have also looted much gold, silver and weapons although you came naked to Syria running away from your land. Accept what I offer or face utter destruction.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : You say that the Romans will never retreat? They will turn on their heels as soon as they see the blades of our swords. As for threatening us with your great numbers you have already seen how we kill double our number and you have seen how we meet your great armies with all their equipment and weapons and all the things we love on the day of battle until it becomes clear which of us is firm in war.

George turned to one of his men called Bahîl and said, "O Bahîl, Caesar knows these 'Arabs better than us."

Then turning his horse's head he returned to Bannes and reported what Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had said.

Bannes : Did you propose a treaty?

George : By Christ! I hardly had a chance to propose such a thing. It would be better if you send the Christian 'Arabs for they understand each other better.

9) Negotiations

Bannes summoned Jabalah bin al-Ayham and said, "O Jabalah, go and threaten them with our massive numbers. Put terror in their hearts and use whatever strategy you can."

Jabalah left and upon nearing the Muslim camp called out, "O 'Arabs, let a descendant of 'Amr bin 'Âmir come out so that I can convey a message to him."

When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ heard this he said, "They have sent one of our nation unto us to deceive us with family ties. Send one of the Ansâr from the descendants of 'Amr bin 'Âmir to him."

'Ubâdah bin al-Sâmit ﷺ quickly said, "O commander, I will go to him. I will see what he says."

'Ubâdah ﷺ rode out on his horse and halted in front of Jabalah. Jabalah saw this tall man, deep-brown in complexion as if he was of the Yamanî tribe of Shanûah. 'Ubâdah ﷺ was extremely tall and his enormous physique frightened Jabalah.

Jabalah : Boy, from which nation are you?

'Ubâdah ﷺ: I am of the descendants of 'Amr bin 'Âmir.

Jabalah : That is good. What is your name?

'Ubâdah ﷺ : 'Ubâdah bin al-Sâmit, Sahâbî of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. What do you want?

Jabalah : O my cousin, I came because I know most of you to be my relations. I have come as a well-wisher to give advice. Know that this army which has come against you has no end. Behind them they have more troops, forts, castles and wealth. You should not say, "We have broken and defeated the armies of Rome before." Know that war's fortunes rotate. If these people defeat you, you will find no protection besides death. If on the other hand they are defeated they can always return to their cities, treasuries, armies and forts. Take what you have so far earned and return safely to your lands.

'Ubâdah ؓ : O Jabalah, do you not know how we confronted their great armies at Ajnâdayn and other places? Allâh helped us and their tyrant flees from us. So now we know that whatever you can throw at us will be quite easily handled. We fear none that comes against us. We have tasted the blood of Rome and find nothing sweeter. O Jabalah, I invite you to the Dîn of Islâm. Enter together with your people into our Dîn. That will bring you honour in this world and the next. Stop being a servant to that Christian of Rome for whose sake you are destroying yourself. You are one of the leaders and kings of the 'Arabs. Our Dîn is such that its start is so clear and the end is as clear as the start. Follow the way of those who follow the Truth and are true to it. Say - There is no deity but Allâh, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh. O Allâh convey salutations and peace on him, his family and his Sahâbah.

Jabalah (angry) : I will never abandon my faith.

'Ubâdah ؓ : So if you insist on remaining on your Disbelief, then beware of meeting me at the first clash, for it will be most severe. If the blades of our swords reach you there will be no escape. Leave us to deal with the Romans for they are insignificant to us. If you are going to stay in this state then the same fate will befall you as will befall the Romans.

Jabalah (even more angry) : How dare you try to scare me with your swords! We are 'Arabs like you are 'Arabs. Men like you.

'Ubâdah ؓ : We are well aware that you came to trick us and spy on us. We are most certainly not alike. Woe unto you! We are firm in our battle, taking our Rabb as one. We follow the Sunnah of our Prophet Muhammad. Behind us is an army which conquers all lands leaving them desolate.

Jabalah : I know of no army behind you besides that little one. Who is there to help you besides them?

'Ubâdah ؓ : By Allâh! You lie, O Ibn al-Ayham. Behind us is an army of great warriors who regard death as a blessing and life as a burden. Each one of them is enough to take on an entire army. Woe unto you! Have you forgotten 'Ali and his strength; 'Umar and his sternness; 'Uthmân and his generosity; al-'Abbas and his great build; az-Zubayr and all the other Muslim horsemen from Makkah, at-Tâif, Yaman and other places?

Jabalah : O cousin, I had come solely as a well-wisher, even if you deny this, and ask your people to accept peace.

'Ubâdah : There can never be peace between us until you either pay Jizyah or accept Islâm. Failing that the sword will decide between us. By Allâh! Were it not for the fact that we consider treachery to be an ugly deed, I would have struck you down with my sword right now.

10) Khâlid sends a delegation to Jabalah

Jabalah felt that the discussion was over and instead of replying, turned his horse and returned to Bannes terrified at 'Ubâdah's words. As he stood in front of Bannes terror was clearly written on his face.

Bannes : What happened?

Jabalah : I warned and threatened and tempted them but it was all in vain. All I got in reply was, "There is only war and fighting between us."

Bannes : Then what is this terror which I see on your face? They are 'Arabs like you and you are 'Arabs like them. I have been informed that they are a mere 30,000 horsemen, whereas you have 60,000 horsemen. Two of you will fight one of them. Fight them with your Christian 'Arab cousins and I will be behind you. If you are victorious then we will share the realm and you will be the closest to us and will be given all the Syrian lands conquered by the 'Arabs.

Bannes continued to encourage Jabalah with great rewards until he agreed to fight the Muslims. He informed his people and clansmen of Ghassân, Lakhm, Juthâm and the other 'Arab Christians and ordered them to arm themselves. They obeyed and dressed in chain-mail and layered armour. All 60,000 were 'Arabs. Jabalah led them wearing his golden armour and Tubba' manufactured sword. Near him was the flag which Heraclius had given him. When he arrived at the Muslim camp, 'Ubâdah was briefing Abû 'Ubaydah about what had transpired between him and Jabalah. When the Muslims saw the Christians they shouted, "O Muslims, the Christian 'Arabs have come to fight you, so what do you say?"

"We will fight them and hope for victory and Allâh's help against them and against the enemy besides them," they replied and prepared to launch a counter-attack.

But Khâlid called out, "Be patient! May Allâh have mercy on you! I will tell you a strategy through which they will be destroyed." Then he said to Abû 'Ubaydah, "O commander, the Romans have sought help from the Christian 'Arabs against us. They are double our number. Even if we fight them with our total force we will be

in a very weak position. Let me send to them a messenger of their nation to ask them to withdraw. If they listen it will be a defeat for them and weaken the Roman position. If they refuse then even a small group amongst us will be able to send them packing with Allâh's help."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Do as you please.

Khâlid ﷺ called Qays bin Sa'd ﷺ, 'Ubâdah bin al-Sâmit ﷺ , Jâbir bin 'Abdillâh ﷺ and Abû Ayyûb bin Khâlid bin Yazîd ﷺ and said to them, "O Ansâr of Allâh and His Messenger, these Christian 'Arabs wish to fight us. They are of Ghassân, Lakhm and Juthâm and are your cousins in lineage. Go out and speak to them. Persuade them not to fight. If they refuse, then our swords will deal with them. We are enough to meet them in battle."

The Sahâbah ﷺ of Rasûlullâh ﷺ went to the Christian 'Arabs and found Jabalah facing the Muslims preparing to fight them. As they approached Banû Ghassân, Jâbir bin 'Abdillâh ﷺ called out, "O 'Arabs of Ghassân, Lakhm and Juthâm, we are your cousins desiring to speak to you."

Jabalah granted permission and they came into his large brocaded tent. He was sitting on a yellow silk rug surrounded by the kings of Jafnah. They greeted him in the manner in which 'Arab kings used to be greeted, thus raising their status in his eyes and he drew them closer.

11) Jabalah and the Ansâr ﷺ

Jabalah : O my cousins, we have common blood and ancestry. I have come out from this army which has come upon you. A man then came from your army and transgressed the limits of speech when addressing me. So now what brings you to me?

Jâbir ﷺ : Do not take us to task for what our friend has said. Our Dîn is based on Truth and wishing well unto others. To wish you well is obligatory since you are a relative. We therefore invite you to Islâm and to become part of our community. You will be entitled to whatever we are entitled to and will be obligated with whatever we are obligated with. Our Dîn is most noble and our Prophet ﷺ most graceful.

Jabalah : I do not like that religion or any other. I am attached to my religion. You, O Aws and Khazraj, are pleased with a thing for yourself while we are pleased with something else. You keep to your religion while we keep to ours.

Jâbir ؓ : If you will not leave your religion then at least refrain from fighting us. Wait and see who is victorious. If we are victorious and you want to accept Islâm we will still welcome you and you will be a brother unto us. If however you wish to remain as a Christian then we will be satisfied with Jizyah from you and will leave you in control of your lands and the lands of your ancestors as well.

Jabalah : I fear that should I refrain from fighting and the Romans are victorious, I will not be safe and will lose my territory. They will only be satisfied with me if I fight against you and have proclaimed me as a leader over all the 'Arabs. Were I to become a Muslim I would be reduced to a low status and it is not in my nature to be a mere follower.

Jâbir ؓ : Bear in mind that if you refuse our offer and we win we will certainly execute you. Therefore stay away from us and our swords which crack open skulls and break bones. However, we would much prefer it if the battle were to take place without you and your men participating.

The Ansâr ؓ were trying to frighten Jabalah and convince him to withdraw, but he remained adamant.

Jabalah : By Christ and the Cross! I will definitely fight on Rome's behalf even if it has to be against all my relations.

Qays bin Sa'd ؓ : The result of what you wish is that the Devil will clasp your heart and sink with you into Hell. You will thus be of the destroyed ones. We have come to invite you to Islâm because your lineage links up to ours. If you refuse then you will taste of such a terrible war wherein a toddler will age before his time and become an old man.

Qays ؓ then sprang up and said to the Muslims, "Arise with the blessings and help of Allâh Most High and in His complete obedience. To Hell with this man!"

Jabalah got up saying, "Be prepared for the battle tomorrow."

12) Khâlid's ؓ audacious plan

The Ansâr ؓ mounted their horses and returned to Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ and Khâlid ؓ to report to them that Jabalah was set on fighting them. Khâlid ؓ exclaimed, "May Allâh exterminate him! He will certainly see what we are going to do with him." He then addressed the Muslims.

Khâlid ﷺ : O Muslims, know that the Devil's army is 60,000 Christian 'Arabs. We, the army of the Most Merciful, amount to 30,000 horsemen. We will have to fight this big force but if we fight them with our entire force, that would be quite cowardly. All we need to do is to send our select and elite warriors against the Christian 'Arabs.

Abû Sufyân Sakhr bin Harb ﷺ : Praise be to Allâh for you, O Abû Sulaymân, your view is correct. So do what you want to and select from the army whomsoever you desire.

Khâlid ﷺ : I propose selecting thirty horsemen, each of whom will have to face 2,000 Christian 'Arabs.

The Muslims were astonished and thought that he was joking.

Abû Sufyân ﷺ : O Ibn al-Walîd, are you joking or serious?

Khâlid ﷺ : I swear, no. I am quite serious.

Abû Sufyân ﷺ : Then you are opposing Allâh's command by wronging yourself. I do not think that there is any good in what you say, although one Muslim against 200 would be easier than what you say of fighting 2,000. Allâh Most Honourable and Majestic is merciful unto His slaves. He has stipulated upon us that one of us may fight two, 100 against 200 and 1,000 against 2,000 whereas you say that thirty of us must go against 60,000? None will volunteer for this and if he does then he will wrong himself and you will have assisted in killing him.

Khâlid ﷺ : O Abû Sufyân, you were so brave in pre-Islâmic times so do not be cowardly in Islâm. See which Muslim warriors I will select and you will see that they are such men who have gifted their lives to Allâh and desire nothing through their fighting except Allâh himself. Allâh knows who possesses these qualities and it will be His responsibility to aid him even if he were to cross repulsive fires.

Abû Sufyân ﷺ : Matters are as you have stated them. I only said this out of compassion for the Muslims. If you have resolved upon this then at least take sixty Muslims so that each will only have to face 1,000 Christian 'Arabs.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Yes. Abû Sulaymân, Abû Sufyân is correct.

Khâlid ﷺ : By Allâh! O commander, all I intended was a strategy against our enemy. If they should flee in defeat and should be questioned, "How many confronted you?"

they would have to reply, “We confronted thirty men!” Thus our terror will enter their hearts and Bannes will know that we are enough for him.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Matters are as you have stated except that if they are sixty they would be a fair group able to protect each other.

Khâlid ﷺ: I am selecting such Muslims whom I know for their patience, steadfastness and the way they forge ahead in battle. I will offer them this mission and if they love to meet Allâh and desire His reward they will accept.

However, if they love the life of this world and wish to remain therein and do not love death then what choice does Khâlid ﷺ have except to spend his life for Allâh Who guides towards that which He loves and pleases Him.

13) The sixty

'Amr bin Sâlim narrates from his grandfather, Bar'î bin 'Adî:

I was with Khâlid ﷺ when he summoned sixty Sahâbah ﷺ of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. He called out, “Where are ‘Amr at-Tamîmî, Shurahbîl bin Hasanah who would write down the revelations of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, Khâlid bin Sa‘îd bin al-‘Âs, Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân al-Umawî, Safwân bin Umayyah al-Jumahi, Sahl bin ‘Amr al-'Âmirî, Dirâr bin al-Azwar al-Kindî, Râfi‘ bin ‘Umayrah at-Tâî, Zayd al-Khayl Abyad ar-Rikâbayn, Huthayfah bin al-Yamân, Qays bin Sa‘d, Ka‘b bin Mâlik al-Ansârî, Suwayd bin ‘Amr al-Ghanawî, ‘Ubâdah bin as -Sâmit, Jâbir bin ‘Abdillâh, Abû Ayyûb al-Ansârî, ‘Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr, ‘Abdullâh bin ‘Umar bin al-Khattâb al-‘Adawî, Râfi bin Sahl, Yazîd bin ‘Âmir, ‘Ubayd bin Aws, Mâlik bin Nasr, Nasr bin al-Hârith, Abdullâh bin Zhafar, Abû Lubâbah bin al-Muthir, Awf, ‘Abis bin Qays, Ubâdah bin ‘Abdillâh al-Ansârî, Râfi bin ‘Ujrah, Ubâyd bin ‘Abdillâh, Mu‘qib bin Qays and Hilâl? Where are those who were patient at the Battle of Uhud, for Allâh has mentioned them in His Book:

فَإِن يَكُن مِّنكُم مِّائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ

If there are 100 patient ones of you, you will overcome 200.
[8:66]

Where are Usayd as-Sa'idi, Kilal bin al-Hârith al-Mâzinî, Hamzah bin 'Umar al-Aslamî and Yazîd bin 'Âmir?"

Khâlid ﷺ called out the names of all those who would go and fight Jabalah although I (al-Wâqidî) have shortened the list. I have given preference to mentioning the Ansâr ﷺ because he chose most of them from the Ansâr ﷺ. When the Ansâr ﷺ heard the frequency with which their names were being called out they remarked, "Today Khâlid is mostly calling out the Ansâr and rarely the Muhâjirîn, the descendants of al-Mughîrah bin Qusayy. Is it because he is testing us or is it because he prefers us to be destroyed and pities the descendants of al-Mughîrah?"

When Khâlid ﷺ heard this he rode with his horse until he was right in the middle of the Ansâr ﷺ and said, "By Allâh! O descendants of 'Âmir, I only call you because of your pleasing qualities. I also have firm trust in you and have selected you for your Faith. You are of those whose Faith is firmly anchored in the heart."

"You are true in what you say, O Abû Sulaymân," they replied and proceeded to shake his hands.

After selecting the sixty, each of whom would have to take on an army by himself, Khâlid ﷺ called out, "O Helpers of Allâh, what do you say about joining me in an assault against this army which has come to fight you? If you have patience then Allâh will aid you and you will be victorious against the Christian 'Arabs. You have already defeated the legions of Rome, so when you defeat these 'Arabs fear will descend in their hearts and they will turn in defeat."

The sixty responded, "O Abû Sulaymân, do with us as you please! Go against however many you want to. By Allâh! We will fight our enemies in support of the Dîn of Allâh. We place our trust in Allâh Most High and His power. We give up our lives in desire for the Hereafter."

Khâlid ﷺ thanked them as did Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who said, "May Allâh have mercy on you. Prepare, get your gear and weapons. Fight with swords only. None of you should take a spear for it is unreliable and often misses the mark. Neither should you take arrows for sometimes they miss and sometimes they hit. The sword and shield are the bases of war. Mount speedy horses which can save you, not such horses which you cannot be patient with. Promise to meet each other at the grave of the Chosen Prophet."

14) The sixty set out

They all went to their families to fulfil their promise (of meeting at the grave) and bid them farewell. As for Dirâr ﷺ, he went to his tent to make his preparations. When he made salâm to his sister, Khawlah bint al-Azwar, and put on his armour, she asked him, "O my brother, why is it that I see you departing like one who is certain never to return? Tell me what you intend doing."

When he told her she wept and said, "O my brother, do what you want to do and meet your enemy for you are one who has firm belief in Allâh, Most Blessed and High. He will help you. Your enemy will not be able to approach you even from afar and will not be able to escape from you even a short distance. If anything should befall you then I swear by Allâh who is Most Mighty that Khawlah will not find rest on this Earth until she avenges you."

Dirâr ﷺ wept because of her weeping, but continued his preparations just as the other sixty Sahâbah ﷺ of Rasûlullâh ﷺ were doing. They did not sleep at all that night, but were bidding their children and wives farewell and wept the whole night in humility before Allâh, begging him for help against the enemy.

In the morning Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ led them in Salâtul Fajr. Upon completing it, the first to rush out for the mission was Khâlid ﷺ who recited :

هبوا جميع إخوتي أرواحًا   نحو العدو نبتغي الكفاحا
نرجو بذاك الفوز والنجاحا   إذا بذلنا دونه أرواحا
ويرزق الله لنا صلاحا   فى نصرنا الغدو والرواحا

O my brethren, all of you give up your life
Towards the enemy we go seeking strife.
In that way we hope for triumph and success
When for that we give our lives in sacrifice.
Allâh will grant us goodness
Morning and evening He will help us.

He recited another couplet which I (al-Wâqidî) do not know.

He went out of the camp leading the Muslims who came one by one until all sixty he had chosen gathered behind him. The last to emerge was az-Zubayr bin al-'Âwwâm

ؓ. His wife, Asmâ bint Abî Bakr, accompanied him. She headed for her brother, 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr, making du'â for safety and victory for the Muslims and said, "O my brother, do not separate from the son of the aunt of Rasûlullâh ﷺ (az-Zubayr ؓ). At the time of battle do as he does and do not allow the fault-seekers to stop you from doing what is right in the Path of Allâh."

The Muslims bade the sixty farewell who moved out with Khâlid ؓ in the centre. He was like a lion in the centre of a pride of lions. They rode until they reached the Christian 'Arabs.

15) Jabalah and Khâlid ؓ

When the Christian 'Arabs saw their small numbers they thought that they were only messengers coming to seek peace. Jabalah called to his men to frighten the "messengers" and then shouted (to frighten the Muslims), "O family of Ghassân, hasten to the aid of the Cross. Fight those who deny it."

They hastened to comply, grabbed their war-gear, raised their crosses and formed rows for battle.

The sun blazed forth heating their iron, armour and helmets until they it seemed as if they were burning in a fire. The Christians stood watching the Muslims. When the Muslims were close to their crosses, Khâlid ؓ shouted, "O worshippers of the Cross, O enemies of the Most Merciful, come to battle and cutting!"

Jabalah finally realised that they were not messengers but had come to fight. Covered in armour, he led his men and recited :

إنا لمن عبدوا الصليب ومن به   نسطو على من عابنا بفعالنا
ولقد علونا بالمسيح وأمه   والحرب تعلم أنها ميراثنا
إنا خرجنا والصليب أمامنا   حتى تبددكم سيوف رجالنا

We are for those who worship the Crucifix,
Those who blame us for our actions soon we will fix.
We are victorious through Christ and His Mother,
War knows us to be the only inheritor.
We come and the Cross we do employ,
With our swords we will destroy.

He then asked, "Who dares to challenge us?"

"I," said Khâlid ✽ and advanced to the main body of their army.

Jabalah : We are prepared to fight you so await our attack. By Christ! I will never accept peace with you. Go back to your people and inform them that we are intent on fighting you.

Khâlid ✽ (amazed) : You actually think that we are here as messengers?

Jabalah : Of course!

Khâlid ✽ : Do not ever think that. By Allâh! Our only purpose for coming out is to fight you. You might consider us to be a small group, but we have Allâh's support against you.

Jabalah: You boy, you have misled yourself and your people if you have come to fight us. We are the chiefs of Ghassân, Lakhm and Ju<u>th</u>âm.

Khâlid ✽ : We are not as few in number as you might think. One of us will combat 1,000 of you and then we will still have one man to spare. I thirst to fight you just as one thirsts for cool water.

Jabalah : O brother of Banû Makhzûm, I had always considered you to be highly intelligent and a formidable warrior until I heard these foolish words coming from you. You and sixty men want to attack us whereas we are the chiefs of Ghassân and the warriors of this era.

I will attack you with 60,000 horsemen and none of you will remain. O Ghassân, charge!

16) One against a thousand

The 60,000 Christians charged, but Khâlid ✽ and the sixty <u>S</u>a<u>h</u>âbah ✽ remained firm. The battle was intense and nothing but the roaring of the warriors could be heard. Swords struck polished helmets until none - either Muslim or Christian - thought that the <u>S</u>a<u>h</u>âbah ✽ would survive. The Muslims wept and became anxious for their brethren. Some even said, "Khâlid has deceived and destroyed the <u>S</u>a<u>h</u>âbah of Rasûlullâh ✽."

In the meantime the Romans exclaimed, "Jabalah has destroyed them. There is no escape for these 'Arabs from destruction at our hands."

The battle continued until noon.

'Ubâdah bin Sâmit ﵁ narrates:

Praise be to Allâh! Khâlid ﵁, az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwâm ﵁, 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr ﵁, al-Fadl bin al-'Abbâs ﵁, Dirâr bin al-Azwar ﵁ and 'Abdullâh bin 'Umar ﵁ were truly amazing. I saw these six joined shoulder-to-shoulder, never separating. The flame of war intensified. Spears ripped the chests of the Muslim lions until they penetrated their hearts to end their lives. This violent battle continued and reached the height of intensity.

I attacked with them and said, "That which has afflicted them (the martyrs) will afflict me too."

Khâlid ﵁ called out, "O Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, gather here."

He penetrated to the centre and as the battle intensified, charged with Hishâm and al-Mirqâl. The Christians then surrounded them, but praise be to Allâh for the bravery of az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwâm ﵁ and al-Fadl bin al-'Abbâs ﵁. They came and al-Fadl ﵁ shouted, "Make space, you dogs. Leave our friends alone. That is az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwâm ﵁ and I am al-Fadl bin al- 'Abbâs, the cousin of Rasûlullâh ﷺ."

I swear that I counted the number of times al-Fadl charged to defend Khâlid ﵁. Upon his twentieth charge they left Khâlid ﵁. The Muslims then launched a great attack against the Christians and remained in combat for the rest of the day until sunset. The Muslims were worried about their brethren.

As for Abû 'Ubaydah ﵁, he called out to the Muslims, "O Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, Khâlid ﵁ and his men have doubtlessly been destroyed. The Muslim horsemen have gone. Attack so that we can see what has happened to our brothers. May Allâh bless you."

All responded positively except Abû Sufyân ﵁ who said, "O commander, do not do that. They will certainly escape on their own. We shall soon see what happens to them."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﵁ paid no heed to his words and remained anxious. He was about to attack when the Christians started fleeing in defeat. The voices of the Sahâbah ﵁ could be heard raising cries of, "Lâ ilâha illallâh wallâhu Akbar!"

Each called out, "I bear witness that there is no deity except Allâh alone, He has no partner, and Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger."

The Christian 'Arabs were fleeing as if someone was screaming at them from the sky. Their cohesion was utterly shattered. Khâlid ﷺ emerged from the midst of the turmoil with clear signs of battle-fatigue on his face. Those who were with him were in a similar state.

17) Missing in action

Khâlid ﷺ began searching for his sixty men, but only found twenty. He began beating himself on the face, saying, "O Ibn al-Walîd, you have destroyed the Muslims. What will your excuse be tomorrow to the Most Merciful and to the Commander of the Believers?"

While he was in that state of confusion, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who had been chasing the enemy arrived with the Muslim warriors and saw what he was doing to himself.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O Abû Sulaymân, praise be to Allâh for helping the Muslims and defeating the Christians.

Khâlid ﷺ : O commander, I know that Allâh defeated the army, but grief follows your joy.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : How is that?

Khâlid ﷺ : O commander, I have lost forty men including az-Zubayr, the cousin of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, and al-Fadl bin al-'Abbâs.

Khâlid ﷺ continued naming them one by one until he had listed all forty.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Verily we belong to Allâh and to Him we return. There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty. Khâlid, your vanity has destroyed the Muslims.

Salamah bin al-Ahwas as-Sulamî : O commander, look for the lost Sahâbah in the battlefield for I saw them either captured by the enemy or going in pursuit of the enemy.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ ordered fires to be lit to dispel the intense darkness. The Muslims then went out to search the bodies lying on the battlefield and found 5,000 Christian 'Arabs dead and two of their chiefs, Rifâ'ah bin Mut'im al-Ghassânî and Shaddâd bin al-Aws. Ten Muslim martyrs were found of whom two were from the Ansâr - Âmir al-Awsî and Salamah al-Khazrajî. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ said, "It is possible that the rest went in pursuit of the enemy. O Allâh, grant us relief soon. Do not sadden us

with the loss of the son of the aunt of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwam ؓ, nor with the son of the uncle of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, al-Fadl bin al-'Abbâs ؓ. O Muslims, who will go after the enemy to find out about the missing Sahâbah? His reward will be from Allâh."

The first to respond was Khâlid ؓ to whom Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ replied, "Do not do this, Abû Sulaymân. You are exhausted from the battle."

Khâlid ؓ : By Allâh! None except me shall go in search of them.

He then exchanged his horse for that of Hâzim bin Jubayr bin 'Adî of Banû an-Najjâr. He went in search of the missing Muslims. A troop of Muslim horsemen followed him. They had not gone far when cries of, "Lâ ilâha illallâh wallâhu Akbar!" were heard. When Khâlid ؓ responded in a like manner the missing ones emerged with az-Zubayr ؓ, al-Fadl, Hâshim and al-Mirqâl taking the lead.

When Khâlid ؓ saw them he was overjoyed and welcomed them. After making salâm to them he asked al-Fadl, "O cousin of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, what happened to you people?"

Al-Fadl ؓ : O Abû Sulaymân, Allâh defeated the Christians and turned them away in defeat. We were following them when some of our men were captured. We tried to free them but found no trace of them. Doubtlessly they have been killed.

Khâlid ؓ : No, they are certainly being held prisoner.

Az-Zubayr ؓ : And how would you know that, Abû Sulaymân?

Khâlid ؓ : We only found ten bodies lying in the battlefield. We are twenty and you are twenty-five which means that five are being held prisoner.

The five prisoners were Râfi' bin 'Umayrah, Rabî'ah bin 'Âmir, Dirâr ؓ, Âsim bin 'Amr and Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ؓ. This was difficult for the Muslims to bear. The search parties returned to Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ who upon seeing az-Zubayr ؓ, al-Fadl, al-Mirqâl and Hâshim safe and joyous at the victory, prostrated on his saddle-bow out of gratitude to Allâh.

Khâlid ؓ : O Muslims, I offered my life but was not blessed with martyrdom. Whichever Muslim was killed had reached his appointed time. If Allâh wills I will free the prisoners.

18) Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ requests reinforcements

A reliable narrator narrates that when Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ saw that the Romans were intent on fighting him, he wrote the following letter to 'Umar ﷺ:

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

To : The Commander of the Believers, 'Umar bin al-Khattâb

From : Abû 'Ubaydah 'Âmir bin al-Jarrâh, his governor

Salâm 'alayka

I praise Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity and I convey salutations upon His Prophet Muhammad.

Know, O commander, that the Dog of Rome, Heraclius, has gathered against us all who carry the cross. They have come against us like a swarm of locusts. We had encamped at al-Yarmûk which is close to ar-Ramâh and al-Khawlân when the enemy numbering 800,000 excluding non-combatant servants arrived. Their vanguard was 60,000 Christian 'Arabs of Ghassân, Lakhm and Juthâm.

The first to confront us was Jabalah bin al-Ayham with his 60,000 men against whom we sent 60 men. Allâh Most High then defeated the Disbelievers.

وَمَا ٱلنَّصۡرُ إِلَّا مِنۡ عِندِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلۡعَزِيزِ ٱلۡحَكِيمِ

Victory is only from Allâh, the Mighty and Wise. [3:162]

Ten of our men were killed. They are Râ'ilah, Ja'far bin al-Musayyib, Nawfal bin Waraqah, Qays bin 'Âmir, Salamah bin Salamah al-Khazrajî etc. Five of them were captured and they

are Râfi' bin 'Umayrah, Rabî'ah bin 'Âmir, Dirâr bin al-Azwar, 'Âsim bin 'Amr and Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ.

We intend to continue fighting so do not neglect the Muslims. Send us reinforcements from amongst the people of Tawheed [Monotheists]. We ask Allâh to help us, Islâm and its people. Peace and Allâh's mercy and blessings be upon you and all the Muslims.

He folded the letter and gave it to 'Abdullâh bin Qurt al-Azdî ﷺ to deliver to al-Madînah.

'Abdullâh bin Qurt ﷺ narrates:

I left al-Yarmûk at 4pm after Asr on Friday 12 Thil Hijjah and arrived at al-Madînah the following Friday at 11am. The masjid was full of people. I tied my camel at the Gate of Jibrâîl and went to the tomb of Rasûlullâh ﷺ to convey salâm to him and Abû Bakr ﷺ. There I performed two raka'ât and then went to deliver the letter to 'Umar ﷺ.

The sight of the letter caused a tumult amongst the Muslims and they looked towards 'Umar. I kissed his hands and gave it to him. When he read it his face changed colour and he was upset and shaken. He said, "Verily we belong to Allâh and to Him we return."

Sahâbah such as 'Uthmân, 'Alî, 'Abdurahmân bin 'Awf and Talhah asked, "O commander of the Believers, tell us about the state of our Muslim brothers."

'Umar then stood up, mounted the mimbar and read out the letter. When they heard it the Muslims began weeping. Ibn 'Awf ﷺ wept the most and said, "O commander of the Believers, send us to them. Were you to go yourself to Syria they would be greatly strengthened, but by Allâh, I only have control over myself and my life and I am not miserly in spending these two things for the sake of the Muslims."

19) 'Umar's ﷺ response

When 'Umar ﷺ saw the great sympathy being exhibited for their brothers, he said, "O Ibn Qurt, who leads the Roman army?"

"There are five generals," I replied, "Caesar's nephew, Theodorus, Trajan, Canter and George. These four are under the supreme command of Bannes, King of Armenia. Jabalah bin al-Ayham al-Ghassânî leads the vanguard of 60,000 horsemen who are all Christian 'Arabs.

'Umar ﷺ : Verily we belong to Allâh and to Him we return. There is no power to do good or ability to avoid evil except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty.

يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِـُٔوا۟ نُورَ ٱللَّهِ بِأَفْوَٰهِهِمْ
وَٱللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِۦ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ ٱلْكَـٰفِرُونَ

They desire to extinguish the Light of Allâh with their mouths,
but Allâh will complete His Light even if the Disbelievers
dislike it. [61:8]

O Muslims, what is your counsel to me? May Allâh have mercy upon you.

'Alî ﷺ : Glad tidings! May Allâh have mercy upon you all. This battle will be a sign from amongst Allâh's signs. He is testing His believing slaves to see their actions and their patience. He will confirm the patient one who expects due reward as truly patient. Remember that Rasûlullâh ﷺ has mentioned to me that this battle will be remembered for as long as this perishing world remains.

Al-'Abbâs ﷺ : O my nephew, against whom will this battle go?

'Alî ﷺ : O Uncle, against those who deny Allâh and ascribe a son unto Him. Be certain of victory from Allâh. O Commander of the Believers, write to your governor, Abû 'Ubaydah, and tell him that Allâh's help is better for him than our help and reinforcements. He will soon find himself in a momentous situation.

'Umar ﷺ mounted the mimbar and delivered such a sermon about the virtues of Jihâd that it shook the listener's hearts and moved them to tears. He then dismounted and led the Muslims in Salâh. After the Salâh he wrote the following response to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ:

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

From : The slave of Allâh, 'Umar, the Commander of the Believers

To : The Trustworthy One of the Ummah, Abû 'Ubaydah bin al-Jarrah and those Muhâjirîn and Ansâr who are with him.

Salâm 'Alaykum

I praise Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity and send salutations upon His Prophet Muhammad.

Allâh's help is better for you than ours. It is not through numbers that victory is gained, but through the help which Allâh sends down. Allâh, Most Honourable and Majestic says:

وَلَن تُغْنِيَ عَنكُمْ فِئَتُكُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَلَوْ كَثُرَتْ وَأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ مَعَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Your armies will be of no benefit to you even if they are numerous and Allâh is with the Believers. [8:19]

Sometimes Allâh helps a petty little group against a mighty army and victory comes only from Allâh Most High who says,

فَمِنْهُم مَّن قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُۥ وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَنتَظِرُ

Some of them have fulfilled their promise (to die in the Path of Allâh) while others still wait to. [33:23]

Congratulations to the martyrs! Congratulations to he who relies upon Allâh! Now go and confront the enemy with those Muslims who are with you. Do not be despondent about those Muslims who were brought down. For I saw such people with Rasûlullâh ﷺ in many battles but they never showed helplessness against the enemy until they became martyred. Do

not fear death but strive in the Path of Allâh as it should be done.

وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلَهُمْ إِلَّآ أَن قَالُواْ رَبَّنَا ٱغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِيٓ أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَٱنصُرْنَا عَلَى ٱلْقَوْمِ ٱلْكَٰفِرِينَ فَـَٔاتَىٰهُمُ ٱللَّهُ ثَوَابَ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَحُسْنَ ثَوَابِ ٱلْـَٔاخِرَةِ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ

They said nothing except, "O our Rabb! Forgive our sins and transgressions in our matter and entrench our feet and help us against the Disbelieving Nation." So Allâh granted them the reward of this world and the better reward of the Hereafter. Allâh loves those who do good. [3:147-8]

When my letter reaches you, read it out to the Muslims and order them to fight the enemy in the Path of Allâh. Recite unto them :

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱصْبِرُواْ وَصَابِرُواْ وَرَابِطُواْ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O you who believe! Be patient, help one another in patience and defend each other and fear Allâh so that you may be successful. [3:200]

Was-salâmu 'alayka wa rahmatullâhi wa barâktuhu.

20) Status of 'Umar ﷺ

'Umar ﷺ folded the letter and handed it to Ibn Qurt ﷺ, saying, "Ibn Qurt, when you come to the Muslims line them up and go between the lines until you come to the

flag-bearers. Inform them that you are my messenger and say: 'Umar bin al-Khaṯṯâb conveys his salâm and says, 'O people of Faith, show them what battle is about when you confront them. Be as fierce as lions against them. Strike their heads with your swords. Consider them to be less than flies because you will be victorious if Allâh wills.' Then recite unto them :

فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ ٱللَّهِ هُمُ ٱلْغَٰلِبُونَ

Verily the party of Allâh is victorious. [5:56]

'Abdullâh bin Qurṯ ﷺ narrates:

I said to him, "O Commander of the Believers, make du'â unto Allâh that I travel safely and speedily."

'Umar ﷺ prayed, "O Allâh, defend him, keep him safe and fold up the long distances. Indeed You have power over all things."

I then departed from the Masjid via the Ethiopia Gate and said to myself, "I will commit a grave error if I fail to make salâm at the tomb of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, for I do not know whether or not I will see it again."

So I went to the room where 'Âishah was sitting at the grave. 'Alî ﷺ and al-'Abbâs ﷺ were also present with al-Ḫusayn sitting in 'Alî's lap and al-Ḫasan in al-'Abbâs's lap. They were reciting Sûratul-An'âm while 'Alî was reciting Sûrah Hûd. I made salâm to Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

'Alî ﷺ : O Ibn Qurṯ, are you going back to Syria?

Ibn Qurṯ ﷺ : Yes, O cousin of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. I think that once I reach there the two armies will already be deeply embroiled in fighting. They will see me coming without help or reinforcements. I really fear that they will become weak and frightened. I wish that I could reach them before they fight so that I can at least advise them and counsel them with patience.

'Alî ﷺ : So what is stopping you from asking 'Umar to make du'â for you? Do you not know, Ibn Qurṯ, that his du'â is never rejected and always reaches Allâh and that Rasûlullâh ﷺ said in his regard: "Were there to be another prophet after me it would have been 'Umar." Is he not that man whose decisions corresponded to that of the

Qurân until Rasûlullâh ﷺ said, "Were punishment to fall from the sky to Earth, none would escape it except 'Umar bin al-Khattâb."

Do you not know that Allâh revealed clear verses about him? Is he not ascetic, pious and always engaged in worship? Does he not greatly resemble the prophet Nûh ﷺ? Should he offer du'â on your behalf it would be answered.

21) Seven day journey in three days

Ibn Qurt ﷺ : I am well aware of all these virtues of 'Umar which you have mentioned, but in addition I would like your du'â and the du'â of al-'Abbâs, the paternal uncle of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, especially here at the noble tomb of Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

Al-'Abbâs ﷺ raised his hand in supplication. 'Alî, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, 'Âishah (and Hafsah and Umm Salamah ﷺ who had also arrived) joined him. He prayed, "O Allâh, we seek intercession through this Chosen Prophet and selected Messenger through whom Âdam also sought intercession and then You forgave his error. O Allâh, make the road easy for 'Abdullâh and fold up the long distances for him. Help the Sahâbah of Your Prophet with victory. You are the Hearer of Du'â."

He then said, "Go, 'Abdullâh, for it is unlikely that Allâh will reject the du'a of 'Umar, 'Abbâs, 'Alî, al-Hasân, al-Husayn and the wives of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, especially when they have interceded through the best of all creation."

Ibn Qurt narrates:

I departed overjoyed. I sat on my camel's saddle and traversed the desert, still happy at the du'â of 'Alî, al-'Abbâs and 'Umar. I left al-Madînah after 'Asr of the same day that I had arrived.

When darkness fell and night cast its veil, I slackened the camel nose-rope but felt as if it was flying off with me. I travelled like that for three days. At the time of Salâtul 'Asr of the third day I reached al-Yarmûk and could hear the athân. I went to Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ tent, made my she-camel sit and made salâm to him, having not seen seen him for the last ten days.

Upon telling him about the du'â of 'Umar, 'Ali, al-Abbâs, al-Hasân and al-Husayn ﷺ he said, " O Ibn Qurt, you have spoken the truth. Allâh holds them to be noble and does not reject their du'â. He then read the letter to the Muslims who were quite

satisfied and said, "O commander, there is none amongst us except that he seeks martyrdom. Allâh Most High is now sending it to us."

22) Sa'îd bin 'Âmir and his army

'Amr bin 'Alâ narrates from Mâjid who narrates from the reliable narrators:

'Abdullâh bin Qurt ﷺ left al-Madînah on Friday. After performing Salatul Fajr with 'Umar bin al-Khattâb we were reciting from the Qurân when suddenly we heard shouts and terrifying sounds. Our hearts filled with fear and we rushed out of the masjid to find 6,000 Yamanîs from Sadwân, Saba and Hadramawt gathering for Jihâd. Jâbir bin Khawal ar-Raba'î led them.

Their chiefs came walking and made salâm to 'Umar bin al-Khattâb who ordered them to encamp at al-Madînah. That same night Sa'îd bin 'Âmir arrived with 1,000 horsemen from Makkah, at-Tâif, Wâdî an-Nakhlah and Thafîq. They also made salâm to 'Umar ﷺ and camped opposite the Yamanîs. On Sunday, 'Umar ﷺ came to see to the weak ones and to equip the armies. He then tied a red flag onto a long spear and gave it to Sa'îd bin 'Âmir.

Sa'îd bin 'Âmir narrates:

I intended departing but 'Umar ﷺ said, "Ibn 'Âmir, wait until I have given you advice."

When he returned on foot to give the advice, 'Uthman ﷺ, al-'Abbas ﷺ, 'Alî ﷺ and 'Abdurahmân bin 'Awf ﷺ accompanied him. 'Umar ﷺ stood with the people around him and said, "O Sa'îd, I appoint you over this army, but that does not mean you are the best of them unless you fear Allâh. When you go, be lenient upon them as far as possible. Do not verbally disgrace them, do not consider the youngsters low, do not give undue preference to the strong, do not follow your personal desires, do not travel through the deserts but choose the level, soft ground instead. Do not encamp with them at the main routes. I leave Allâh Most High to watch over you on my behalf and on behalf of your men."

'Alî ﷺ : Listen to the instructions of the Commander of the Believers through whom Allâh completed forty *(i.e. 'Umar ﷺ was about the fortieth person to embrace Islâm - translator's note)* and through whom this Ummah is called Believers. He is that man about whom Rasûlullâh ﷺ said: "If you obey him you will be on guidance and the correct way."

O Sa'îd, go and when you meet Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and confront that army the like of which does not exist elsewhere and you find matters too difficult then write to the Commander of the Believers so that he can send me to turn the Christians upside down in Syria, Allâh willing.

Ibn 'Âmir departed reciting:

نسير بجيش من رجال أعزة   على كل عجعاج من الخيل يصبرُ
إلى شبل جراح وصحب نبينا   لننصره والله للدين ينصر
على كل كفار لعين معاند   تراه على الصلبان بالله يكفر

With an army of honourable men we are travelling
On bellowing horses who are persevering.
To Jarrah's lion-cub and those who were
unto our Prophet a companion
To help him and Allâh will assist His religion.
Against every stubborn, accursed Disbeliever
Who denies Allâh and worships the Cross Forever.

He travelled with all haste.

23) Sa'îd's dream

Sa'îd bin 'Âmir narrates:

I knew the cities and roads of Syria since I travelled there once or twice a year. I travelled recklessly off the main routes following the stars. When I led the Muslims out of al-Madînah I took the Busrâ Road. Having gone off the main road I ended up lost, wary of the enemy and fearing for the Muslims. I had been avoiding the enemy habitations and sticking to the desert as Allâh had put it in my heart to be merciful to His believing slaves. Once lost, I could not find the road again. It was as if I had never travelled on it before. I stopped in confusion until the Muslims behind me caught up with me but I did not tell them what was wrong, that is, that I had lost the road. I was reciting, "There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty."

I wandered in that state of confusion for two days and nights until the Muslims began to question me about that. I said to them, "I am on the right track."

On the tenth day of our departure from al-Madînah, a huge mountain became visible. I scrutinised it but could not recognise it, so I said, "You have deceived the Muslims but if that is the mountain of Ba'labakk then the road will easily be found."

The mountain was visible at the beginning of the day, but we only reached it at night. As we neared it we came across a valley where there was a massive tree. Upon examining it I recognised it and called out, "Good news. We have attained Syria and victory for the Muslims."

Once we entered the valley we found it to be rough and roadless and this added to the fatigue of the Muslims. Most of the Muslims were on foot, supporting each other as they followed the camels and horses. When the Muslims saw the desolateness of the valley and the rough path, they complained, "O Sa'îd, we think that you have lost the road and are taking us on the wrong path. Let us rest for a while in this valley for this journey has really harmed us."

I gave them permission, so they went to drink from a gushing spring in the valley and watered their camels and horses and let them graze from the leaves of the trees. Most of the Muslims went to sleep while some engaged themselves in conveying salutations upon Muhammad ﷺ. I was sitting amongst the sleeping ones to guard them. I recited the Qurân and was making du'â for safety when sleep overcame me. I dreamt that I was in a garden with many trees and fruit. I was eating from its fruit and drinking from its rivers. I also plucked the fruit to give to my companions. They ate and I was happy. While I was in that state a lion suddenly sprang from amongst the trees and roared right in my face, intending to rip me apart. Suddenly two giant lions attacked the lion and brought it to the ground. It rumbled loudly and with that I awoke with the sweetness of the fruit still in my mouth and the image of the lions in my mind.

I interpreted the dream to mean that the Muslims would gain great booty which they would then be prevented from, but would again triumph in the end. I said to myself, "The garden perhaps represents martyrdom."

I continued to sit and read the Qurân in a state of great anxiety when I heard a voice call out from the right side of the valley:

يا عصبة الهادي إلى الرشاد   لا تفزعوا من وعر هذا الوادي
ما فيه من جن ولا معادي   ستعلمون معشر العباد
لطف الذي يرفق بالأولاد   ويطرح الرحمة في الأكباد
سيصنع الله بكم رشاد   وتغنموا المال مع الأولاد

O army of the Guide, do not be frightened by this valley
Though it be rough and roadless.
There are no Jinn therein and it is quite enemyless.
Soon you will be treated like children with love and mercy.
Allâh will grant you wealth and children aplenty.

Upon hearing this poem and the promised booty I prostrated out of thanks to Allâh and found the Muslims to have awoken due to the recitation of the poem. I memorised one couplet of the poem while Sammâ<u>h</u> memorised the remaining three which he recited to me. The Muslims were overjoyed at what they heard from the unseen voice and were pleased with the promise of booty.

24) Capture of al-Jinân

We remained in the valley until morning when I led them in <u>S</u>alâtul Fajr. At sunrise we left the valley. By this time I recognised the land and mountain which was ar-Raqîm Mountain. I called out loudly, "Allâhu Akbar!" The Muslims echoed my call and asked, "What do you see, Ibn 'Âmir?"

"We have reached the lands of Syria," I replied, "This is ar-Raqim Mountain."

(Where the Seven Companies slept for centuries - see Surah al-Kahf - translator's note).

Because most of the men were uneducated bedouins, they queried, "What is ar-Raqîm?"

"Do you not know?" I exclaimed and told them the story which amazed them. I then took them to the Cave where they performed <u>S</u>alâh.

We continued until we approached 'Ammân. From here I diverted to a village called al-Jinân. The village-chiefs were at that time marching out of the village with their

wives and children. When the Muslims saw them they attacked without my permission and took some of them as prisoners.

The rest returned to the village and took refuge in a fort. I went to the fort and called out, "Woe unto you! To where were you marching before you ran back?" One of them came and said, "O 'Arabs, we were going out, but you frightened us. The governor of 'Ammân had ordered us to go to 'Ammân to be under his protection there. O 'Arabs, will you grant us your rule and protection?"

"Yes," I replied and wrote out the treaty for them stipulating payment of 10,000 dînâr. When we wished to leave they said, "Nikita, governor of 'Ammân will definitely put you to great difficulty. If you triumph over him it will be to our mutual benefit."

"How do we overcome him?" I asked.

They replied, "King Bannes has ordered Nikita to take his men to join Constantine at Caesarea. If you manage to reach and defeat him before he leaves you will acquire a large booty."

"How many troops are there in 'Ammân?" I asked.

"5,000," they replied, "but their hearts are filled with terror of you. They will never be victorious."

"O Muslims," I called out, "What do you say about attacking the patrician of 'Ammân and winning his booty?"

"As you wish," they replied. "For if Allâh kills him at our hands it will be good for the Muslims and a defeat for the Christians."

I asked the villagers, "Which road will they be passing through?"

They pointed out the Amorium Road. We continued until we reached another huge valley where we hid for a day and night without anyone pitching up.

25) The dream fulfilled

In the morning I said, "O Muslims, 'Umar has sent us to reinforce Abû 'Ubaydah. To fulfil that purpose is much better than sitting here. Leave now. May Allâh have mercy upon you. It will weaken and disgrace the Christians when we arrive with our 7,000 men."

They complained, "O Sa'îd, we were looking forward to the booty so do not deprive us."

While they were arguing a party of monks and priests appeared. They were wearing fur and carrying crosses. Their heads were shaven in the middle. The Muslims rushed at them and brought them back as prisoners.

Sa'îd : Who are you?

Chief Priest : We are the monks of these monasteries. We are going to Constantine to pray for his victory.

Sa'îd :

فَٱدْعُوا۟ ۗ وَمَا دُعَـٰٓؤُا۟ ٱلْكَـٰفِرِينَ إِلَّا فِى ضَلَـٰلٍ

Go and pray as you like, but the prayer of the Disbelievers is in vain! [40:50]

What news do you have of what is behind you?

Priest : Behind us the governor of 'Ammân is coming with 5,000 Christian cavalry.

Sa'îd : O Allâh, make that booty for us. Listen old man, our Prophet ﷺ has prohibited us from harming the monks who remain in their monasteries. We would release you but we fear that you will warn the enemy about us.

I then ordered the Muslims to tie them up which they did with their waist-bands. Suddenly the 'Ammân cavalry could be seen coming. Ahead of them were men on foot who were removing the stones from the track. As soon as they came we attacked them without even waiting to get our gear. We raised cries of, "La ilâha illallâh wallâhu Akbar!" and slew the footmen to the last man.

When the patrician saw what the Muslims had done he ordered the cavalry to charge and a heavy battle ensued. I saw the Muslims spreading death amongst the Christians and calling out, "La ilâha illallâh wallâhu Akbar!" until the patrician fled in the direction of 'Ammân. His men followed him. Some of the Muslims went in pursuit of them while others went to collect the booty. Nikita was far ahead of his men and then stopped in order for them to catch up to him.

During that time a cavalry numbering about 1,000 came charging from behind them. They held their bridles loose and spears fixed. Two horsemen who resembled lions were in the lead. One of them was az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwâm ﷺ and the other al-Fadl bin al-'Abbâs ﷺ. They attacked and spread death amongst the Christians. Az-Zubayr ﷺ attacked Nikita who had halted under a cross and speared him right through the heart, flinging him from his horse. Allâh thus sped his soul to Hell. Al-Fadl advanced striking down and killing the enemy.

When we arrived I thought that the Romans were fighting each other, but upon hearing, "Lâ ilâha illallâh wallâhu Akbar," being called out we said, "That is the proclamation of Truth." So I plunged into the battle and heard al-Fadl proclaiming his lineage, "I am the cousin of Rasûlullâh ﷺ."

By Allâh! Not a single enemy escaped.

I said to al-Fadl ﷺ, "Ibn 'Abbâs, praise be to Allâh for you. Who amongst the Sahabah of Rasûllullâh ﷺ are with you?"

"Az-Zubayr bin al 'Awwâm ﷺ, the son of the aunt of Rasûllullâh ﷺ, is with me," he replied.

Az-Zubayr ﷺ came to me and said, "Ibn 'Âmir, why did you not come to us? Sâlim bin Nawfal al-'Adawî told us that you were supposed to be coming. We had bad thoughts of what might have befallen you so Abû 'Ubaydah sent us to raid 'Ammân. Praise be to Allâh for the safety of the Muslims and destruction of the Disbelievers."

Upon az-Zubayr's ﷺ orders the Muslims beheaded the enemy corpses and stuck the heads on their spear-points. The heads amounted to 4,000 and the prisoners 1,000. Sa'îd released the monks and the Muslims went on to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. When they arrived their voices echoed with, "Lâ ilâha illallâh," and "Allâhu Akbar". The other Muslims responded in a like manner.

These calls confused the Romans and when they saw the arrival of the 8,000 Muslims carrying the Roman heads they became absolutely bewildered. When Sa'îd reported to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ about the victory and booty, the commander fell into prostration out of thanks to Allâh.

He then ordered the prisoners to be beheaded. They were taken and beheaded in sight of the Romans.

Qutbah bin Suwayd narrates:

The Romans were informed that not one of the 'Ammân garrison had survived.

26) Bannes's scheme

The Sahabah of Rasûllullâh ﷺ were greatly depressed at the capture of the five Sahabah of Rasûllullâh ﷺ with Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ being the most saddened of all. He constantly wept and made du'â for their release. The five were brought before Bannes, may Allâh's curse and anger be upon him, who belittled them and said to Jabalah, "Who are they?"

Jabalah : O King, they are from the Muslim army. They were a band of sixty, of whom I killed the majority and captured these five. Now there remains none in the army to be feared except one man who keeps them firm and launches their attacks. He is the one who conquered Arakah, Palmyra, Hawrân, Busrâ and Damascus. He is the one who broke our ranks at Ajnâdayn and chased Thomas and Herbius. He killed them and captured Heraclius's daughter. He is Khâlid bin al-Walîd.

Bannes : I will devise some scheme to bring him to me and then I will kill him together with these five prisoners.

Bannes summoned a Roman sage, Jarjah, who was fluent in 'Arabic and said to him, "Jarjah, I am sending you to the 'Arabs. Tell them to send an envoy to us, but stipulate that the man called Khâlid must come."

He rode to the Muslim camp where he met Khâlid ﷺ.

Khâlid ﷺ : What do you want?

Jarjah : King Bannes has sent me to you to request that you send an envoy. It may be that God stops the bloodshed between us.

Khâlid ﷺ : I will be the envoy.

He took him to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and informed him of his intention to go to Bannes.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Abû Sulaymân, go, may Allâh keep you safe. Perhaps Allâh will guide them or perhaps he wants to surrender and pay Jizyah and then Allâh will spare bloodshed through you. The saving of one Muslim's blood is more beloved unto Allâh than all the Disbelievers put together.

Khâlid ﷺ : I seek Allâh's aid.

He went to his tent where he put on a pair of Hijâzî socks, his black turban, his leather-belt and sword which he had seized from Musaylamah al-Kaththab at the battle of Yamâmah. He then ordered his slave, Hammâm, to take his red tent made of Tâifî leather which was embossed with gold and decorated with silver ornaments. He had bought it from the wife of Maysarah bin Masrûq al-'Absî for 300 dînârs. It was loaded onto a mule while Khâlid ﷺ mounted his horse. As he was about to depart Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called out, "Abû Sulayman, take some Muslim men with you to aid you."

Khâlid ﷺ : I would like that, but I cannot force them for they owe me no obedience. So you order whom you like.

Mu'âth bin Jabal ﷺ : Abû Sulayman, you are of high rank. Were you to order us we would obey for you are going in obedience to Allâh and His Messenger ﷺ.

Khâlid ﷺ selected 100 Muhajirîn and Ansâr to accompany him. These included : al-Mirqâl bin 'Utbah bin Abî Waqqâs; Shurahbîl bin Hasanah ﷺ; Sa'îd bin Zayd bin 'Amr bin Nufayl al-'Adawî; Maysarah bin Masrûq al-'Absî; Qays bin Hubayrah al-Murâdî; Sahl bin 'Amr al-Âmirî; Jarîr bin 'Abdillâh al-Bujalî; al-Qa'qâ' bin 'Amr at-Tamîmî; Jâbir bin 'Abdillâh al-Ansârî; 'Ubadah bin as-Sâmit al-Khazrajî; al-Aswad bin Suwayd al-Mâzinî; Thul Kalâ' al-Himyarî; al-Miqdâd bin al-Aswad al-Kindî and 'Amr bin Madîkarab az-Zubaydî. May Allâh be pleased with them all. Khâlid ﷺ continued selecting such great personalities until the hundred were completed, each of them willing to take on an entire army on his own.

They put on their good clothes and war-gear and threw their cloaks on top of that. They then bound turbans on their heads and attached daggers to their waists and took their swords. Finally they mounted their horses. Khâlid ﷺ left with Mu'âth ﷺ on his right, al-Miqdâd bin al-Aswad al-Kindî ﷺ on his left and all the rest surrounding him.

27) Allâh's mat

Muâ'th bin Jabal ﷺ narrates:

So we went proclaiming, "Lâ ilâha illallâh," and "Allâhu Akbar."

Nasr bin Sâlim al-Mâzinî narrates:

I saw that as Khâlid ﷺ and his men departed Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ recited a verse of the Qurân, weeping until his tears flowed down his cheeks. I asked him, "O commander, why do you weep?"

"O Ibn Sâlim," he answered, "By Allâh! These are the helpers of the Dîn. If anything should happen to even one of them under the command of Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, then what excuse can he offer to the Rabb of all the worlds and to the Commander of the Believers, 'Umar bin al-Khattâb?"

When Khâlid ﷺ and his men arrived at the Roman camp they saw that it was spread over a distance of five Farsakh (27.4 km).

Nawfal bin Dahyah narrates:

Khâlid ﷺ and the 100 men dismounted. They walked confidently and dragged their swords. They fearlessly went right through the ranks of attendants and patricians fearing none of them until they reach Bannes who was sitting on his throne. Cushions, rugs and brocade decorated the tent. When the Sahâbah ﷺ saw all this beauty and pomp they declared Allâh's greatness and refused to sit on the chairs that were brought for them. They went to the extent of removing the rugs etc. and sitting on the bare ground. Bannes smiled at this and said, "O 'Arabs, you refuse our hospitality. Why did you remove the seats and sit on the bare ground? You showed no etiquette towards us and trampled on our rugs."

Khâlid ﷺ : To show etiquette to Allâh is better than to show etiquette to you. The mat of Allâh, the Earth, is much purer than your filthy mat for our Prophet ﷺ has said, "The Earth has been made a masjid and means of purification for me."

مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَٰكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَىٰ

From the earth We have created you. To it We will return you and then extract you a second time. [20:55]

'Asim bin Rawwâh az-Zubaydi narrates from Ibn 'Abdillâh ash-Shaybânî who narrates from Tarfah bin Shaybah al-Khawlânî who narrates from his paternal uncle, Jarîr, who was an ally of Khâlid ﷺ:

There was no intermediary between Khâlid ﷺ and Bannes. They spoke face-to-face.

Khâlid ﷺ : Bannes, I dislike to initiate the dialogue, so you say what you want to. However, I do not care what you say, I will have an answer for you – whether you speak first or I do.

Bannes : I begin praising God who made His soul, Christ, His Word, who made our Emperor the best of all and who made our nation the best nation.

28) Bannes's drivel

Khâlid ﷺ was upset and cut him short. The translator reprimanded him, "O 'Arab brother, do not interupt the words of the king. Observe due etiquette." Khâlid ﷺ however refused to keep silent.

Khâlid ﷺ : Praise be to Allâh who made us believers in our Prophet, your Prophet and in fact all the Prophets and Who made our Commander as but one of us, were he to claim to rule us we would depose him – we give him no rank over us except if He fears Allâh. We praise Him who made our Ummah that which orders the good, forbids the bad, confesses sins, seeks forgiveness from sins and worships Allâh alone without ascribing any partner unto Him.

Bannes's face turned yellow but he kept silent for a while.

Bannes : Praise be to God who tested us and found us worthy, who relieved us from poverty, who helped us against our enemies, who granted us dignity and prevented all injury from us. We are not of those who become arrogant and proud due to the blessings of God. O 'Arabs, a group of you will always prostrate before us, snatch our hand-outs, follow us and our authority. We were good unto them, honoured them and their down-trodden ones. We recognised their value and fulfilled our agreements with them. We thought that all the 'Arab tribes would be aware of these policies and would be grateful for the wonderful gifts we showered upon them. So when you people came with all your horses and men we but thought that you were coming to seek what your brethren always sought, but alas, we were wrong. You came killing men, enslaving women, plundering wealth, destroying buildings and seeking to drive us out of your own lands and conquer everything. Others also attempted this before

you who were stronger, more numerous, better armed and richer than you but we always threw them out, unsuccessful, afraid and half-dead. We first did this to the Emperor of Persia. God sent him back in disgrace. Similarly we dealt with the kings of the Turks, the Jarâmiqah and others.

As for you, there is no nation less significent or more despicable than you. You are wretched, suffering bedouins who know nothing but poetry. Inspite of all that you commit oppression not only in your own lands but now come to our lands as well, whereas we are a mighty nation, powerful and strong enough to stop you. Now you come from your rainless, famine-stricken country and what havoc you wreak. You mount horses which do not belong to you. You wear clothing which does not belong to you. You use the daughters of Rome, the young white girls, and enslave them. You eat food which is not yours. You wrongfully fill your hands with our gold, silver and fine goods.

Now we meet you in this state that you still have all that you have stolen from our people and co-religionists. Keep it! We demand nothing back from you, nor do we even rebuke you. All we ask is that you withdraw from our lands. If you refuse we will wipe you out. If you are agreeable to peace we will give each of your soldiers 100 dînâr and a robe. For Abû 'Ubaydah, your general, 1,000 dînâr and for your Khalîfah, 'Umar, 10,000 dînâr. This is on the condition that you vow never to return.

29) No brotherhood with Christians

Bannes thus sometimes threatened and sometimes bribed while Khâlid ﷺ remained silent until he had completed.

Khâlid ﷺ : The king has spoken and has spoken well while we listened. Now we will speak while he listens.

All praise belongs to Allâh besides whom there is no other deity.

Bannes (stretching his hands to the sky) : Yes, it is as you say, O 'Arab.

Khâlid ﷺ : I bear witness that there is no deity besides Allâh and that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger.

Bannes : I do not know if Muhammad is a messenger or not. It may or may not be as you claim.

Khâlid ﷺ : Every man prefers his own religion. The best moment is that wherein the Rabb of all the worlds is recognised.

Bannes (speaking in his language to his people) : This is an intelligent man who speaks words of wisdom.

Khâlid ؓ : What did you tell your people now?

(He told him).

Khâlid ؓ : Allâh Most High alone is to be praised for whatever intelligence I may have been granted. I have heard our Prophet Muhammad saying,

"When Allâh created intelligence, gave it form and limits. He said, 'Come forward' so it came forward. Then he said, 'Go back' so it went back. Allâh Most High then said, 'By My Honour and Majesty! I have not created a creation more beloved unto me than you. Through you will my obedience be attained and my Paradise entered.'"

Bannes : If you had intelligence and understanding in this matter, you would not have brought all these men with you.

Khâlid ؓ : I brought them to consult with.

Bannes : You claim that inspite of your sharp mind, deep insight and wise opinion you still need to consult with others?

Khâlid ؓ : Certainly! Allâh Most Honourable and Majestic has ordered our Prophet Muhammad to do this. He says in His Honourable Book :

وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ ۖ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ

Consult them in the affair and then when you have reached a decision place your reliance upon Allâh. [3:159]

The Prophet ﷺ said, *"A man who recognises his worth is not destroyed nor is a Muslim who consults destroyed."*

So even if I am intelligent and wise as you claim yet I am not independent of the opinions of my companions.

Bannes : Is there anyone in your army equal to you in wisdom and intelligence?

Khâlid ؓ : Yes, there are more than 1,000 such men whose views and consultation cannot be ignored.

Bannes : We never thought that about you people. We heard that you are a greedy, ignorant nation bereft of all intelligence. You attack each other and loot each other's wealth.

Khâlid ؓ : Yes, that was the state of most of us until Allâh sent our Prophet ﷺ to us. He guided us, showed us the correct way and made us understand the difference between good and evil, guidance and misguidance.

Bannes : Khâlid, your wisdom and insight really amazes me. I would love to have you as my brother and intimate friend.

Khâlid ؓ : It would be an occasion of great joy were your words to be fulfilled. You will be most fortunate and we will never separate from each other.

Bannes : How is it to be achieved?

Khâlid ؓ : Say, "I bear witness that there is no deity besides Allâh and that Muhammad is his Slave and Messenger about whom 'Îsâ bin Maryam had prophesied." Once you have done that you will be my brother and I yours. We will never separate except through some calamity.

Bannes : You have called me to leave my religion and enter yours, but that is impossible.

Khâlid ؓ : Then it also impossible for us to be brothers for as long as you remain on your astray religion.

30) Khâlid ؓ responds to Bannes

Bannes : I will address you modestly as a brother. Answer my proposals and I will listen.

Khâlid ؓ : We already know of all that you have mentioned with regard to your people being wealthy, honoured, powerful, strong against enemies and established in the lands. We also know about the generosity you have mentioned which you show to your 'Arab neighbours. However, you have done all that simply to maintain your opulence with a view to protecting yourselves and children and ultimately to increase your wealth and prestige. So your empire increases and you impose your imperialist policies on whomever you please.

As for your saying that we are poor and herd camels and sheep, what of it? Most of us do this and he who herds is of higher status amongst us than he who does not herd.

We do not deny when you say that we are poor, wretched and suffering. That is because Allâh has made us 'Arabs inhabit a waterless, treeless land wherein there is but little cultivation. In pre-Islâmic times we were all ignorant. A man would own nothing except his horse, sword, camels and sheep. The strong would eat the weak. None were safe from each other except during the four sacred months. Instead of worshipping Allâh we worshipped idols who neither hear, nor see, nor benefit. We would bow down to them and carry them. We were on the edge of a pit of fire. Whoever died amongst us died as a polytheist and would go to Hell. Those living denied their Rabb and broke family ties.

Then Allâh sent unto us a Prophet as a guide, one who is guided and as a prophet and messenger. We all knew his worth and noble lineage. He was sent as a pious leader who proved Islâm and refuted the Polytheist. He brought the clear Qurân and the Straight Path and with him Allâh brought the process of prophethood to an end. He ordered us to worship Allâh and not to ascribe any partners unto Him. He forbade us from having any helper besides Allâh and from ascribing any wife, son, partner or equal unto Allâh. He taught us that we should not bow down to the sun, the moon, light, fire, cross or altar. We should bow down to none except Allâh alone who has no partner and should acknowledge the Prophet ﷺ, his Sahâbah and family.

Allâh revealed to him His speech through which our master guided us. We accepted and obeyed him. Amongst his orders is that we should wage Jihâd against those who do not accept our religion, who do not say as we say, who deny Allâh and who ascribe partners unto Him whereas He is too grand for such a thing and neither sleep nor slumber overtakes Him.

Whoever follows us will be our brother and will have the same rights and obligations as the rest of us. Whoever refuses Islam will have to pay Jizyah, humbly with his own hand. Then his blood, children and wealth will be safe. Whoever refuses both Islâm and Jizyah will face our swords until Allâh decides the outcome, and He is the best decision-maker.

We call you to these three options besides which there is no other choice. Either say, "We bear witness that there is no deity except Allâh alone Who has no partner and that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger," or pay Jizyah. Adult males have to pay it annually. However, pre-adolescents, women and monks who seclude themselves in their monasteries are not liable to pay it.

Bannes : Is there any other obligation after saying, "There is no deity besides Allâh"?

Khâlid ﷺ : Yes. You must establish Salâh, pay Zakâh, perform Hajj to the Sacred House, wage Jihâd against those who deny Allâh, order the good, forbid the evil, befriend for the sake of Allâh and make enemies for the sake of Allâh. If you refuse then there will be war between us until Allâh grants the Earth to whomsoever He wishes, but the result is always in favour of those who fear Him.

Bannes : Do as you please for we will never abandon our religion or pay Jizyah. As for your saying that He gives the Earth to whomever He likes, that is true for once upon a time this land belonged neither to us nor to you, but to another nation. We fought them until we took it from them. So now there will be war between us. Come and fight in the name of God.

Khâlid ﷺ : You cannot be more eager for war than us. It is as if I already see you defeated with victory ahead of us. You will be dragged with a rope around your neck in disgrace and humiliation. You will be brought before 'Umar bin al-Khattâb who will behead you.

Bannes became furious. When the Romans saw that, they wanted to kill Khâlid ﷺ but awaited Bannes's orders.

Bannes : By Christ! I will now bring your five captured men and behead them in front of you.

Khâlid ﷺ : Listen to what I say, Bannes! You are indeed disgusting enough to do such a deed. Know that they are of us and we are of them. I swear that if you kill them then I will kill you with this sword of mine and each one of my men will kill one or more of your men.

Khâlid ﷺ then sprang from his place, unsheathing his sword. His men imitated him and shouted, "Lâ ilâha illallâh Muhammad Rasûlullâh ﷺ!" and sprang like camels or rather like beasts of prey. They sought to kill and were convinced that they would be martyred.

31) Why this book was compiled

I (al-Wâqidî) swear by Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity and Who is the Knower of the invisible and visible! I have evaluated and narrated these reports on the basis of utter honesty so that I can establish the great value of the Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and refute the Shî'is who abandon both the Sunnah and what is obligatory. Allâh has willed that were it not for them then those lands would not have

been in the possession of the Muslims and knowledge of this Dîn would not have spread. Allâh be praised at their deeds! They waged Jihâd as it should be waged. They were firm in confronting the enemy. They strove to their utmost. They helped this Dîn until they tore Disbelief from its seat and it declined. This is a well established fact. The King Who has all power has said about them:

فَمِنْهُم مَّن قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُۥ وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَنتَظِرُ

Amongst them are those who have fulfilled their vows and amongst them are those who await. [33:23]

32) The prisoners are released

Muslim bin 'Abdil-Hamîd narrates from his grandfather, Râfi' bin Mâzin:

I was with Khâlid ﷺ the day he went to Bannes. We were in the tent when we drew our swords to attack them. We did not have any regard for the armies of Rome and were certain that we would be resurrected from that spot.

Once Bannes understood our reality and death came flying from our swords he called out, "Respite! Khâlid, do not be hasty in destruction. I know that you said those words in your capacity as envoy and envoys should be tolerated and not killed. I only uttered those words to test you and to see what you would do. Now I will seek no revenge from you. Return to your camp and prepare for battle until God grants victory to whom he chooses.

Khâlid ﷺ *(sheathing his sword)* : Bannes, what are you going to do to the prisoners?

Bannes : Out of honour of you I am freeing them. They may help you, but you will still be helpless against us tomorrow.

Khâlid ﷺ was delighted and told him to free them. After their chains were let loose he wanted to depart but Bannes said, "Khâlid, I wish things were better between us. I want to ask you a favour."

Khâlid ﷺ : Ask what you will.

Bannes : I like that red tent of yours. Gift it to me and take whatever pleases you in the camp in return.

Khâlid ! : By Allâh! It pleases me no limit that you ask for something I own. It is yours. As for your offer to take something from the camp I have no need for it.

Bannes : God be praised! How generous you are.

Khâlid ! : You are also generous to us in releasing our men from captivity.

He then set out surrounded by his men. His horse was brought to him and they all mounted their horses. Bannes ordered his men and attendants to escort the Muslims to their camp and they did this.

Khâlid ! and his men reached Abû 'Ubaydah ! and said salâm to him. The Muslims were overjoyed at the release of the Sahâbah of Rasûlullah ! and Khâlid ! then reported to Abû 'Ubaydah ! all that had transpired.

Khâlid ! : I swear that Bannes only released them out of fear for our swords.

Abû 'Ubaydah !: He is a wise man except that the Devil has overpowered his wits. On what terms did you depart?

Khâlid ! : That we will confront them tomorrow so that Allâh may grant victory to whomever He desires to.

33) The Muslims prepare for battle

Thereupon Abû 'Ubaydah ! gathered all his senior officers and stood to deliver a sermon to them. He praised Allâh, made the appropriate mention of Rasûlullâh ! and then informed them of the impending enemy attack the following morning. He thus advised them to get ready. The Muslims went about encouraging each other.

Khâlid ! went to his elite force and said, "Know that these Disbelievers against whom Allâh granted you victory in many places have now mobilised an army against you from all their lands. I entered their camp and found them to be as numerous as ants. However, they may have numbers but have no hearts, nor do they have Him to help them against you. This will indeed be the decisive battle between you and them. The battle is set to commence tomorrow morning. You being men of battle and combat, should express your feelings now. May Allâh have mercy upon you."

Muslims : O commander, battle is our goal and martyrdom in the Path of Allâh Most

High is our happiness. We will be patient in every combat, stab and cut until Allâh decides between us. Verily He is the Best Decider.

Khâlid ﷺ was pleased with this reply and exclaimed, "May Allâh guide you and show you the correct way."

Every Muslim spent the night arranging his gear, equipment and weapons. They spent the night overjoyed at the prospect of Jihâd and reward from Allâh but also fearing His punishment. In the morning, several proclaimers called out the athân which resulted in a loud and vocal declaration of the oneness of Allâh's Being. The Muslims performed their wudû with the utmost care and then prayed behind Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. Thereafter they formed three joined rows to go against the enemy, the one in front not able to see the one at the back. Khâlid ﷺ went to ask Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "O commander, whom do you appoint over the left-wing?"

He either replied, "Kinânah bin Mubârak al-Kinânî," or "'Amr bin Ma'dîkarab," Allâh knows best which one. So he gave that one a bow, putting him in charge of the left-wing and then left upon Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ orders.

Fadâlah bin 'Âmir narrates from Mûsâ bin 'Awf who narrates from his grandfather, Yûsuf bin Ma'n:

Kinânah was a brave boy who was skilled in war-tactics. The following illustrates his bravery, sternness and horsemanship. He would leave the district of his tribe, Banû Kinânah and go to the district of enemy 'Arabs. He would call out to them announcing his name, and they would come out on horseback to fight him. If he defeated them then his object was attained and if he saw that they would overcome him he would dismount and run away. They were not able to catch anything of him except his dust.

After Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had appointed him he went to where he ordered him to go. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ then said to Khâlid ﷺ, "I am appointing you in overall command of both cavalry and infantry, so choose your deputies as you like." Khâlid ﷺ said, "I will appoint such a man who has no equal."

He then called Hâshim bin 'Utbah bin Abî Waqqâs and said to him, "The commander appoints you over the infantry."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Dismount, Hâshim. May Allâh have mercy on you. I will also join you.

34) The two sides mobilise

While Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ was mobilising the troops and arranging their formations, Khâlid ؓ said to him, "Send for the flag-bearers and tell them to listen to me." So he sumoned ad-Dahhak bin Qays and said to him, "Ibn Qays, hurry to the flag-bearers and say to them, 'The commander, Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ, commands you to listen to Khâlid ؓ and obey him.'"

Ad-Dahhak thus went to the flag-bearers, reaching Mu'âth bin Jabal ؓ last. Mu'ath ؓ replied, "I hear and obey" and then turned to his men to say, "You have been placed under a man who is blessed in his attacks. Do not oppose him in what he orders you to do."

He said that intending the well-being of the Muslims and hoping for reward from Allâh.

Ad-Dahhak bin Qays narrates:

I said to Mu'âth ؓ, "You utter very weighty words about Khâlid ؓ!"

"I only utter that which I know about him," replied Mu'âth ؓ.

"May Allâh be praised for him!"

I reported to Khâlid ؓ how Mu 'âth ؓ had praised him. He praised him in return and said, "He is my brother for the sake of Allâh. He and his companions have gone ahead and Khâlid ؓ is unable to catch them."

I returned to Mu'âth ؓ and narrated Khâlid's ؓ words of praise. He exclaimed, "By Allâh! I love him for the sake of Allâh. I hope that Allâh will reward him for his good intentions and well-wishing towards the Muslims."

Once ad-Dahhâk had gone to the flag-bearers telling them of Abû 'Ubaydah's ؓ instructions to obey Khâlid ؓ, Khâlid ؓ went between the ranks, stopping at each flag to say, "O people of Islâm, patience is the sign of firm resolution and bravery. Weak-heartedness and cowardice are causes for defeat. It is Allâh's responsibility to help the patient man against his enemy for Allâh is with him. Whoever is patient at the edge of swords will be honoured by Allâh when he meets Him and will be shown gratitude for his action and effort. Allâh loves those who are grateful."

He gave this speech at every flag. He then gathered to himself all the patient, fierce warriors and those who had participated with him in combat and divided them into

four squadrons. He appointed Qays bin Hubayrah al-Murâdî over the first squadron and said to him, "You are an 'Arab horseman.You are in charge of this cavalry, follow whatever I do."

He then appointed and instructed Maysarah bin Masrûq and 'Âmir bin at-Tufayl ﷺ in a like manner, taking personal command of the elite advance force.

By sunrise all the military formations had been completed.

On the other side, Bannes ordered the Romans to get all their decorations and gear. They did so, except that the Muslims were faster in getting ready. A party of Romans advanced towards the Muslims and saw the Muslims as if they were a single solid structure with birds shading them. Their ranks were all linked together with their spears forming a thicket of fixed points. At this sight Allâh flung terror into their hearts.

Bannes continued his preparations and placed the Christian 'Arabs of Ghassân, Lakhm and Juthâm as the vanguard. Jabalah was again in command of them. A silver cross weighing five Ritl was placed before him. It was plated with gold and had at each of the four branches a jewel glittering like stars.

Sinân bin Aws ar-Raba'î narrates from 'Adî bin al-Hârith al-Hamdânî who was from those who participated in the conquest of Syria from beginning to end:

Bannes formed thirty rows each of which equalled the entire Muslim army. He sent priests and monks amongst his men to recite the Bible and sing hymns and erected numerous flags, banners and crosses.

35) Romanus and the patrician

Once the Roman ranks were arranged a patrician emerged on a grey horse. He was heavily-built and wore golden armour and decorated upper-body armour. Around his neck was a jewel-encrusted gold cross. He was of high rank and a courtier of Heraclius. He started shouting in Greek in a voice like thunder. The Muslims realised that he must be challenging them to a duel but hesitated to go. Khâlid ﷺ called out, "O Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, this uncircumcised Christian challenges you to duel him but you hesitate. If you do not go then Khâlid ﷺ himself will."

He was about to leave when a Muslim horseman mounted on a giant grey Turkish horse resembling the Christian's, rode to the patrician. He was wearing good upper-

body armour and excellent gear. None of Khâlid's ؓ men recognised him so he instructed Hammâm, "Go and investigate who this is from amongst the Muslims and to which nation and tribe he belongs."

Hammâm went out to him and just as the stranger was nearing the Christian he called out, "O man, who are you from amongst the Muslims? May Allâh have mercy on you."

"I am Romanus, governor of Busrâ," he replied. When Khâlid ؓ was informed he said, "O Allâh, bless him and increase his intention."

The patrician recognised Romanus and they spoke in Greek.

Patrician : Romanus, how is it that you abandoned your religion and apostatised to these people?

Romanus : The religion I have entered is noble and glorious. Whoever enters it is fortunate. Whoever opposes it is astray.

The two then flung themselves at each other in a lengthy duel which astonished both parties. The patrician caught Romanus off-guard and managed to strike a blow which injured him and caused blood to flow.

The blow affected Romanus so he turned back to the Muslims. The patrician came in pursuit, not slackening in the least. He was about to reach Romanus when the Muslim left- and right-wings started encouraging their man. This gave Romanus courage and dismayed the patrician. The Roman then turned and cut short his chase.

Romanus entered the Muslim ranks with blood gushing from his face. A group of Muslims took him and bandaged his wounds. They thanked him for his action, promised him Allâh's forgiveness and congratulated him on his safe return.

Romanus's defeat made the patrician even more haughty. He uttered harsh words and challenged the Muslims to duel him. Maysarah bin Masrûq intended responding but Khâlid ؓ stopped him, saying "Maysarah, I prefer that you stay. You are an old man while he is a heavily-built brave youth. I do not want you to go, for a youth usually overpowers an old man. A single strand of hair of a Muslim is more beloved unto Allâh than all the lives of those who do not believe."

Maysarah then returned to his post.

'Âmir bin at-Tufayl ﷺ then wished to go and said, "O Commander, you have exaggerated the greatness of this low Christian and placed fear in the hearts of the Muslims."

Khâlid ﷺ : Horsemen recognise their peers in battle whose bravery and strength cannot be hidden from them. You cannot overcome him for the bravery that he has displayed shows him to be a great horseman from amongst them. Go back to your post."

'Âmir ﷺ returned without arguing.

36) Qays and the patrician

The patrician continued issuing his challenge, so al-Harith bin 'Abdillâh al-Azdî went to Khâlid ﷺ and said, "O commander I am going out to him."

"I swear," replied Khâlid ﷺ, "that you are quite intrepid, strong and fierce. I know you to be quite brave. If you want to go, go in the name of Allâh and be resolute."

Al-Hârith took his gear and was about to depart when Khâlid ﷺ called out, "Be careful, O slave of Allâh, I want to ask you something."

Al-Hârith : Ask.

Khâlid ﷺ : Have you engaged in a duel before this?

Al-Hârith : No.

Khâlid ﷺ : Then go back for you are inexperienced while he is experienced. He has tasted war and war has tasted him. I want a man who is equal in insight to him to go against him.

Khâlid ﷺ looked at Qays bin Hubayrah who said, "Abû Sulaymân, if you are hinting at me then I will gladly duel him."

Khâlid ﷺ : Go forth in the name of Allâh for He is adequate. Allâh Most High will help you against him.

Qays rode his horse until it calmed down and then allowed it to trot towards the patrician. He shouted, "In the name of Allâh and through the blessings of Rasûlullâh ﷺ." When the patrician saw his action he realised that it was a strong horseman from the Muslims and headed towards him. They attacked each other. Qays struck at the

Christian's head who promptly protected himself with his shield. The sword cut right through the shield and became stuck in the Roman's helmet. Qays tried to extract it, but it remained firm. After these two blows they clashed and the Roman giant went at Qays intending to capture him. Qays on the other hand fasted and stood in salâh at night after he had returned from the wars against the apostates making him very thin. He realised that he was about to be defeated and sought some strategy against the enemy. However, since his sword was lost he galloped away intending to get another sword from the Muslims and return although he had already lost hope. The Roman screamed and chased him. Qays then slowed down and said to himself, "Martyrdom is your desire after all, so why do you flee from this Christian?"

When he turned back Khâlid ﷺ shouted at him, "Qays, return and leave this to me. I beg you in the name of Allâh and His Rasûl."

Qays : Khâlid, you have begged me in the name of two great beings, but can you guarantee me that if I return you can increase my life-span?

Khâlid ﷺ : No.

Qays : Then I cannot flee and become an inmate of Hell. Rather I will be patient and attain Allâh's pardon

He then turned to his opponent without a sword, but he drew a dagger kept at his waist. Khâlid ﷺ then called out, "Who will deliver this sword to Qays in order to earn divine reward?"

"I, Abû Sulaymân," volunteered 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr ﷺ.

"By Allâh! O Ibn Abî Bakr," exclaimed Khâlid ﷺ, "You are the right man," and handed him the sword.

37) 'Abdurahmân ﷺ and the patrician

'Abdurahmân ﷺ took the sword and carried it to Qays. When the Romans saw him with Qays they thought that he had come to help Qays against their man, so another patrician came and joined the first one to help him against the Muslims. 'Abdurahmân ﷺ gave Qays the sword and stayed there with him. The second patrician began to speak to him in a language he did not comprehend so he said, "Woe unto you! What are you saying? We do not understand your speech." A translator then arrived and said, "O 'Arabs! Do you not claim to be people of justice and correctness?"

'Abdurahmân ﷺ : Certainly.

Translator : We see no justice when two of you come against one of us.

'Abdurahmân ﷺ : I only came to give my companion a sword and then return. Were 100 of you to come out against one of us we would not be worried. You are now three men. I am enough to take on all three of you.

When the translator informed the patrician of that he looked distrustfully at 'Abdurahmân ﷺ.

'Abdurahmân ﷺ : Qays, you are tired. Rest and watch what happens between me and them.

He then attacked the patrician who had been speaking to him and speared him through the upper chest until the spear-point penetrated through his back and he fell down dead. The two remaining Christians came to attack him while Qays come to help him. 'Abdurahmân ﷺ said, "No, I implore you in the name of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and Abû Bakr to let me fight these two alone. If I am slain then you are my partner in reward and convey my salâm to 'Âishah and tell her, 'Your brother has joined your husband and father.'"

So Qays stayed back, amazed at his action.

'Abdurahmân ﷺ thrust his spear at the first Christian. The spear point broke off, stuck in the Roman's armour. So 'Abdurahmân ﷺ threw away the spear and unsheathed his sword. He stood up on his saddle and struck such a blow at the Roman which split him in two pieces. The translator stood stunned and confused, staring at 'Abdurahmân ﷺ, perplexed at his valour. Qays also stood up out of amazement so 'Abdurahmân ﷺ said to him, "What has made you stand, Qays?" and then killed the Roman in a single blow. When the Romans saw what had happened to their men they said, "These 'Arabs are nothing but devils."

38) The patrician's dream

When Bannes was informed, he said to his people, "Caesar really knew these people best. I now know that a difficult situation is to come on you. If you do not attack them with great numbers you will have no chance." A patrician then came to him and whispered for a long time in his ear. Bannes's face turned yellow and then the patrician left again. He remained as silent as if he were dumb. They questioned him as to what the patrician had said but he would not say anything.

Someone who had witnessed the scene went to ask Jabalah for an explanation. He explained: When Bannes was told of the three, including the first patrician, he said, "They are helped against you." The patrician then came and said in his ear, "O king, what you say is true. Last night I dreamt that men mounted on grey and pie-bald horses descended from the sky. They were completely armed and surrounded the 'Arabs whom we faced. None of us would come out against them except that they would kill him until they had killed most of us. I think that they are the same men. I now see how one of them killed three of us. They are certainly helped against us from the sky."

This broke Bannes's heart and he would not reply to anyone. The people gathered to question him as to what the patrician had told him, but he would not inform them. After persistent questioning he said as if he were delivering a sermon, "O people of this religion, if you do not fight you will be losers and Christ's wrath will fall upon you. God remains the Helper and Defender of this Faith. God has ample proof against you in that He sent a Messenger and Book unto you. That Messenger did not hanker after the world and he ordered you not to hanker after it. In His Book He commanded you not to oppress for He neither loves oppression nor oppressors. Now that you are hankering after the world, oppressing and opposing Him, He is helping your enemies against you. What excuse can you offer your Creator for abandoning the command of your Prophet and what has been revealed in the Book of your Lord? These 'Arabs who are facing you desire to kill your warriors and capture your children and women. Yet, you still remain in disobedience and sin, not fearing the Knower of the unseen. If God should snatch your Empire from your hands and grant victory to your enemy then that is only fair and just on His part, for you neither order good nor forbid evil."

Bannes had ordered the patrician who had seen the dream to keep it concealed. As for Qays and 'Abdurahmân ﵁ they took the spoils of the three Romans and returned to the Muslim camp where they gave the spoils to Abû 'Ubaydah ﵁. He said to them, "Whoever kills a horseman keeps the spoils - that is our order from 'Umar."

They took the spoils back.

Qays remained stationed where Khâlid ﵁ had positioned him while 'Abdurahmân ﵁ went out to the battlefield between the two parties. He had mounted the grey Turkish horse of the patrician he had killed but found that it did not proceed the way 'Arab horses do so he returned and changed it. He first attacked the right-wing where he caused much confusion and killed two horsemen. He returned to attack the centre then the left-wing where he was showered with arrows.

A Roman came out against him and was killed after a battle lasting an hour. When another came he killed him too. Khâlid ﷺ saw this and exclaimed, "O Allâh! Oversee him with Your Eye and protect him for 'Abdurahmân has started the war on his own."

He then called out, "'Abdurahmân, upon oath, return now." So he returned due to Khâlid's ﷺ oath.

39) The first martyrs

Hizâm bin Ghanam narrates:

I said to someone who had participated in al-Yarmûk, "Did women participate with you in the battle?" "Yes" he replied, "Amongst them was Asmâ bint Abî Bakr – the wife of az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwâm ﷺ – Khawlah bint al-Azwar, Nasîbah bint Ka'b, Umm Abân – the wife of 'Ikramah bin Abî Jahl, 'Izzah bint 'Âmir bin 'Âsim ad-Dumarî – who fought with her husband, Maslamah bin 'Awf ad-Dumarî – Ramlah bint Tulayhah az-Zubayrî, Ru'lah, Umâmah, Zaynab, Hind, Ya'mur, Lubnâ and others like them – may Allâh be pleased with all of them for they fought in a way which is certain to please Allâh and His Rasûl ﷺ.

'Abdul Malik bin 'Abdil Hamîd who witnessed al-Yarmûk narrates:

We experienced light fighting on the first day because Bannes only ordered ten rows to attack us after 'Abdurahmân ﷺ had killed whom he had killed. The Muslims retaliated and the fighting began in earnest. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was standing and watching and thought that even though Bannes had not yet personally attacked, matters were bad enough. He said, "There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty." Then he recited:

ٱلَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّ ٱلنَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا۟ لَكُمْ

فَٱخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَـٰنًا وَقَالُوا۟ حَسْبُنَا ٱللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ ٱلْوَكِيلُ

Those to whom the people say, "The people have gathered against you, so fear them," their faith but increases and they

say, "Allâh is sufficient for us and the best disposer of affairs."
[7:173]

The battle continued from midday until sunset. The two parties did not separate until night-fall. They did not recognise each other except by calling out code-words and each 'Arab tribe called out its tribal name. Thus each group returned to its camp. The Muslim women met the returning men. They wiped their hair on their husbands' faces saying, "Glad tidings of Jannah, O friend of Allâh." The Muslims spent the night in a happy and good state for there were few dead from both camps on the first day. A handful of Romans had been killed while ten Muslims were martyred. Two martyrs were from Hadramawt: Mâzin and Sârim; three martyrs were from 'Usfan: Râfi', Mujlî and 'Alî; one was an Ansâri: 'Abdullâh bin al-Akhzam; three were of Bujaylah; one was of Murâd tribe: Suwayd, the nephew of Qays bin Hubayrah.

40) The women of Jannah are calling me

Qays was troubled when his nephew went missing. Supposing him to be amongst those killed, he went with his tribesmen to search for him but they could not find him. When they intended to return they saw a fire coming from the direction of the Romans. They were looking for a patrician's body. Qays said to his people, "Extinguish your fire for by Allâh I will avenge my nephew on these people."

They extinguished their fire and sat amongst the corpses preparing for combat. 100 highly equipped Romans eventually appeared. On the other hand, Qays had only seven men with him. His tribesmen said, "They are 100 while we are only seven and are very tired."

"Then you can go back," retorted Qays, "I will seek death and nothing else. I will wage Jihâd in the Path of Allâh as it should be waged."

They were astonished at his words and stayed with him as only noble people can.

The Romans were searching the corpses and paused at the corpse of the patrician whom 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr had killed in the first duel. As they carried the corpse and turned towards their camp, Qays, followed by his men, shouted. Bewildered, the Romans threw down the corpse as the Muslims began working their swords amongst them and massacred them. Each time Qays hit he declared, "This is for my nephew." Qays personally killed sixteen while his men killed most of the rest and the survivors fled.

That accomplished, Qays started searching for his nephew in the direction of the Roman camp. He heard a groan and upon approaching the source, found it to be his nephew, Suwayd bin Bahrâm al-Murâdî. Upon recognising Qays he wept.

Qays : What makes you weep, my nephew?

Suwayd : O my uncle, I was chasing the Romans when one of them turned and speared me through my chest. Now I am experiencing through it something amazing. The virgin damsels of Jannah are standing opposite me awaiting my soul's departure.

Qays (weeping) : Man has his set time. Perhaps there is yet time for you, my nephew.

Suwayd: By Allâh! Hasten, uncle, if you are able to then take me to the Muslim camp so that I may die in the Muslim camp, not here.

Qays : Certainly.

Qays bin Hubayrah narrates:

I carried Suwayd on my back to the Muslim camp and made for his tent.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ heard of Qays's arrival so he went to him and saw the boy dying. He went to sit at his head and wept and all the Muslims wept with him.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : How is your condition, my nephew?

Suwayd : By Allâh! In goodness and forgiveness. May Allâh reward Muhammad ﷺ on our behalf well. He was true to us in what he said, "These women of Jannah are calling and staring at me."

He then died. We did not sleep until we had buried him.

When Qays informed Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ of the Romans who had been killed that night he was extremely pleased and took it as an omen of victory. The Muslims spent the night reciting the Qurân, performing Salâh and making du'â for help and victory.

41) The good character of the Romans

When Bannes returned to his camp the patricians, priests and monks came to him and presented him with food. However, the patrician's dream troubled him so much that he could not eat a morsel. In fact, he was ready to abandon the whole struggle and pay Jizyah but realised that matters were not in his hands. The princes, priests,

patricians and monks came to him and said, "What ails the king that he does not eat? If it his sadness at those killed and the situation of the battle, well that is simply the fortune of war – one day it is against you, the next day for you. O king, they had the upper hand until now and we will not rule them, but will attack them and eliminate every one of them."

Bannes : You can only be victorious if you do not change your religion and tyrannise in the Empire. Those are the reasons why the 'Arabs have overcome you.

Roman : I have lived years following the same religion as you. I owned 100 sheep which my son used to herd for me. One of your senior officials came and pitched his tent nearby. He looted what he wanted to of the sheep while his men took the rest. My wife then went to him to complain. Upon seeing her he called for her where she remained for a long time. Her son therefore went to the tent to find him raping his mother. When he screamed the patrician had him executed. I then came for my son and wife. He gave orders for my slaying as well but the sword struck my hand only thus amputating it.

He then took out the amputated hand. Bannes blazed with fury and asked, "Do you recognise that patrician?" "Yes," replied the man and pointed out a patrician. Bannes looked at him angrily. He and the other patricians became angry in turn at this insult and proceeded to strike the complainant with their swords until they had killed him.

Bannes's anger increased and he shouted, "You are defeated. You are destroyed. By Christ! You hope for victory when you perpetrate such crimes? Do you not fear retribution tomorrow and that God will take vengeance against you and seize whatever good He has bestowed upon you and give it instead to others who order good and forbid the bad? By God! I regard you as dogs now. Very soon you will see the result of this and how you are going to finally end up."

He then stood up and dismissed them. All left except a patrician who said, "O king, by God! These people are certainly as you describe them and I have no doubt that they will be defeated. I dreamt that men were coming from the sky. They were mounted on grey horses and were fully armed. They came and surrounded the 'Arabs facing us. I saw that they killed whoever of us went out against them until most of us had been killed."

He went on mentioning exactly what the previous patrician had dreamt. Bannes then spent the entire night worrying about what to do with the Muslims.

42) Bannes writes to Heraclius

In the morning the Muslims adopted military formation and looked towards the Roman camp from where thundering and commotion was emanating. They realised that something was happening. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ said, "Leave them for the wrong-doer is always defeated."

The four Roman generals went to Bannes to ask him permission to commence the battle.

Bannes : How can I fight on the side of such a tyrannical nation. If you are free men then go and defend your empire and women.

Generals : We want to fight now. By Christ! We will not leave them until we have expelled them from Syria back to their own lands. Either they will kill us or we will kill them. Rely on our word, get up and come with us against them. Once you have decided on battle you can appoint each day one of us to lead the fight and vie with the others until you see who is the stronger and better warrior and who will humiliate the 'Arabs. We will gather all our children, wives and wealth and if we are victorious will return everything to its place. If they are victorious then our families can return to their lands. This matter between us will be settled in a day or two.

The accursed Bannes : Give me respite until I write to Heraclius about that.

He then wrote to Heraclius the following letter :

O Caesar, I ask God to grant you and your army victory, to grant your subjects honour and victory. You despatched me with countless numbers. When I came to them I made offers which they refused. I offered peace which they rejected. I offered them a reward for withdrawing but they did not leave. Caesar's army is terrified of them. I fear that cowardice has spread amongst them and that fear has entered their hearts. That is because of the great amount of oppression which exists.

My advisors had gathered and decided upon going against them all together and we will not leave them until God decides between us. If God should grant victory to our enemy against us then the Earth runs according to His decision. Know that this world is to leave you sooner or later so do not despair at that part of it which has been lost. Do not covet for more of it to

come into your hands. Take your family and court and move to Constantinople. Do good unto your subjects and God will be good unto you. Have mercy and mercy will be shown unto you. Be humble unto God and he will elevate you, for He dislikes the haughty ones.

I had implemented a scheme to bring their general, Khâlid, to me. I tested and bribed him but he did not respond. I saw him to be firm on the Truth. I had planned to kill him, but then feared the results of treachery for these people have only been victorious by following justice and truth. Greetings!

He then folded the letter and despatched it.

Bannes remained inactive for seven days after the initial confrontation. He neither attacked the Muslims, nor did the Muslims attack the Romans. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ therefore sent a spy to investigate what was keeping the Romans back. The spy was absent for a day and night. Upon returning he told Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ that Bannes had written to Heraclius and was awaiting his reply.

Khâlid ﷺ then said, " The only reason he is hesitating is because fear has entered his heart. So let us attack him."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Do not hurry, for haste is from the Devil.

43) A spy in the Muslim camp

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was a soft man in battle who preferred leniency. On the other hand, Bannes resolved to fight on the eighth day. He saw his men's eagerness for battle and was pleased at their zeal. He called a Christian Lakhmî and said, "Go and spy on the 'Arabs for me."

The Lakhmî entered the Muslim camp and roamed about for a day and night. No Muslim troubled him and were all at peace. They were doing nothing besides seeing to their personal needs, reading Qurân, performing Salâh and remembering Allâh. There was no transgression or oppression amongst them. None wronged another. He went to Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ place and found him to be the most delicate of all 'Arabs. Sometimes he sat on the ground and at other times he slept thereon. At the time of Salâh he would arise and perform wudû with the utmost care. After the athân was called out he would lead the Muslims in Salâh. The Lakhmî saw that the Muslims prayed exactly as he did and so said, "This is absolute obedience. They will soon be victorious."

He then returned to Bannes and reported to him.

Lakhmî : O king, I have come to you from such a nation who fast during the day and pray at night. Were one of them to steal they would cut off his hand even if he is of high status and would stone him were he to commit adultery. They do not give preference to personal desire over Truth, Truth is always preferred. Their commander may be the feeblest amongst them, yet they obey him. When he stands they stand. When he sits they sit. Their desire is battle. Their passion is attack. Their intention is to die as martyrs in fighting you. The only reason they tarry in attacking you is so that the aggression can be from your side when you start, not theirs.

Bannes : They will be victorious except that I now have a plan to prevent that.

Lakhmi : What is it, O king?

Bannes : Did you not claim that they will not attack first until we attack and become the aggressors?

Lakhmî : Yes.

Bannes : Then we will not attack them until they become neglectful. We will then attack them by surprise when they do not have their gear with them. Perhaps we will triumph.

Bannes then summoned the princes and tied for them flags and crosses. The crosses totalled 160, beneath each were 10,000 men. He gave the first flag to Canter who was his equal in rank and ordered him to command the right-wing. Then he put Trajan in charge of the Armenians, the plainsmen, the North Europeans, the Nubians and the slaves. Caesar's sister's son, Theodorus, was given the Franks, Hercalaneans, Caesareans, the Yarfal and the Dûqas. Jabalah was given a flag to command the vanguard consisting of the 'Arab Christians of Lakhm, Ju<u>th</u>âm, Ghassân and <u>D</u>abbah. Bannes then said, "You are 'Arabs and our enemies are 'Arabs. Iron is only cut with iron." He then distributed the divisional banners.

At dawn all preparations had been completed. He then ordered his tent to be erected on a sand-hill at the side of the Yarmûk River, so that he could watch over both armies. On his right he stationed 1,000 strong, fierce horsemen who were heavily armed. On his left he had a similar number of aristocrats who were of the Imperial Court. He ordered them to be alert and then said, "What worry can be greater to the 'Arabs than the fact that we are prepared and they are without preparation. When the sun rises and you see the Muslims unprepared then attack them from every direction. Compared to us they are but like a white spot on a black camel."

44. Allâh's secret intelligence service

I (al-Wâqidî) have heard the very aged man Iyâd bin Ghâlib al-Himyarî narrate from Jawwâd bin Usayd bin 'Alqamah as-Sakâsikî who narrated from his father:

At dawn athân was proclaimed and Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ led the Muslims in Salâh without knowing of Bannes's plot.

In the first rak'ah he recited:

وَٱلْفَجْرِ وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ

By dawn and the ten nights, [89:1-2]

until he reached:

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِٱلْمِرْصَادِ

Indeed your Rabb is waiting in ambush, [89:14]

Suddenly an unseen voice said, "By the Rabb of Honour! You have triumphed over the enemy. Their plot will not help them in the least. Allâh has inspired your commander to recite these verses as a hint to you."

When the Muslims heard this they were astonished. He then recited in the second rak'ah:

وَٱلشَّمْسِ وَضُحَىٰهَا

By the sun and its light appearing, [91:1]

until:

فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُم بِذَنۢبِهِمْ فَسَوَّىٰهَا وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَـٰهَا

So their Rabb crushed them due to their sins and levelled them. He does not fear the consequences. [91:14-15]

The unseen voice then said, "The omen is complete. The rebuke is correct. This is a sign of victory!"

After Salâh Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ said, "O Muslims, did you also hear the unseen voice?"

Muslims : Yes, we heard it.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : By Allâh! That was a voice of victory and granting of hope. Rejoice at Allâh's help and victory. By Allâh! He will certainly help you and send the scourge of punishment down on them just as He had sent down on the ancient nations. O people, I had a dream last night which indicated victory against the enemy and help from the angels.

Muslims : May Allâh keep the commander in a good state. What did you dream?

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : I dreamt that I was standing opposite the Romans when men came and surrounded us. They were dressed in white robes so beautiful that I had never seen the like thereof before. They were so white that they glittered with light which dazzled the eye. They wore green turbans, carried yellow flags and rode grey horses. As they surrounded me they said, "Advance upon your enemies. Do not fear them for your victory is assured because Allâh is your Helper."

Then they called some of you and gave them to drink from cups which they had with them. I then saw our army penetrating into the Roman army. When they saw us they fled.

Muslim : May Allâh keep the commander in a good state. I also saw a dream last night.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : It will also be good. What did you see? May Allâh have mercy on you.

Muslim : We were coming out against the enemy and formed rows for battle. Suddenly white birds burst upon them from the sky. They had green wings and claws like eagles. They swooped like eagles upon them. Whoever they struck fell down dead.

The Muslims rejoiced at this dream and said to each other, "Rejoice, Allâh has granted you safety and victory and has extended His help to you in the form of angels who will fight with you just as they did at the Battle of Badr."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was also happy and said, "It is a good and true dream. Its interpretation is that of victory. I hope that Allâh will grant victory to us and the good outcome of the pious."

Another Muslim : O commander, what is stopping us from these Christian dogs. Why are you waiting to fight when the enemy of Allâh wants to trap us through delay. They are only holding back in order to strike us with some calamity."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Matters are closer than you think.

45) Men and women

Sa'îd bin Rifâ'ah al-Himyarî narrates:

While we were in that state we heard shouts and screams of battle rising from every direction indicating that the Romans had already attacked us. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ thought that the Muslims must have been caught by surprise and attacked at dawn. He arose to go and look. Sa'îd bin Zayd bin 'Amr bin Nufayl al-'Adawî ﷺ was on guard that night. He came shouting, "To arms! To arms!" until he stood in front of Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ with a Christian 'Arab.

Sa'îd ﷺ : O commander, Bannes has tricked the Muslims by tarrying from war. He has now mobilised his army and is launching a surprise attack while we are without gear or preparations. This man came to us desiring to enter Islâm and to warn us. He says that Bannes and his patrician advisors have decided upon this strategy that on each day one general will attack with all his men and this is the hardest possible attack against us.

The Muslims saw the flags and crosses of Rome coming. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ exclaimed, "There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty. Where is Abû Sulaymân Khâlid bin al-Walîd?"

Khâlid ﷺ : I am at your service.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : You are for me, Abû Sulaymân. Take the best warriors and defend the women until such time and we can organise and get our gear.

Khâlid ﷺ : I willingly obey.

He then called out, "Where are az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwâm ﷺ, 'Abdura<u>h</u>mân bin Abî Bakr, al-Fa<u>d</u>l bin al-'Abbâs, Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ, Rabî'ah bin 'Âmir, Maysarah bin Masrûq, Maysarah bin Qays, 'Abdullâh bin Unays al-Juhanî, Abû Sufyân <u>S</u>akhr bin <u>H</u>arb al-Umawî, 'Ammârah ad-Dawsî, 'Abdullâh bin Salâm, Ghânim al-Ghanawî, Al-Miqdâd bin al-Aswad, Abû <u>Th</u>arr al-Ghifârî, 'Amr bin Ma'dîkarab, 'Ammâr bin Yâsir al-'Absî, <u>D</u>irâr bin al-Azwar ﷺ, 'Âmir bin a<u>t</u>-<u>T</u>ufayl, Abân bin 'Uthmân bin 'Affân..." He continued calling different <u>S</u>a<u>h</u>âbah, each of whom were capable of taking on an army by himself. They all came to Khâlid ﷺ and engaged in combat while Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ organised the Muslims.

Abû Sufyân ﷺ came to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and said, "O commander, order our women to go on top of that hill."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : That is correct.

He ordered them and they complied, seeking protection up there with their children and babies. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ said to them, "Take tent-pegs and place stones in front of you. Encourage the men towards fighting. If we win then well and good, but if you see any man fleeing then strike him in the face with the pegs and pelt him with stones, lift your children towards them and say, "Defend your family and the Dîn of Islâm."

Women : We obey and will please you.

After seeing to the women, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ returned to organising the men. They rushed into battle as soon as he had placed the right- and left-wings, the centre and the two sub-divisions of the vanguard. He appointed the flag-bearers, each Muhajir tribe had its own colour – yellow, green, white, black etc. He placed the Muhajirîn ﷺ and An<u>s</u>âr ﷺ at the centre and the Muslims got their gear and weapons. He divided the Muslims into three rows, archers of Yaman, cavalry and infantry. The cavalry was placed under three commanders: Ghiyath bin <u>H</u>armalah al-Âmirî, Maslamah bin Sayf al-Yarbû'î and al-Qa'qa' bin 'Amr at-Tamîmî.

The Muslims stood under their flags. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ also stood under his yellow flag which Abû Bakr ﷺ had tied for him the day he had departed for Syria; it was the flag of Rasûlullâh ﷺ with which he had gone to Khaybar. Khâlid ﷺ had the black flag of the eagle. Shura<u>h</u>bîl ﷺ was given infantry, Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ the right-vanguard and Qays bin Hubayrah the left-vanguard.

46) The advice

Once all ranks had been formed Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ went amongst the men to encourage them. He said:

إِن تَنصُرُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ يَنصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ

If you help Allâh's Dîn He will help you and make your feet firm. [47:7]

"Be patient because patience is the saviour from worry. Please Allâh and restrain the enemy. Do not break from your ranks. Do not break your intentions. Do not take a single step without the remembrance of Allâh. Do not initiate battle until they have first started. Have your spear points fixed and take cover with your shields. Maintain absolute silence except for the remembrance of Allâh. Do not undertake any initiative except with my orders."

He then returned to his station at the centre. Mu'âth bin Jabal ؓ then went amongst the people, encouraging them to battle and saying, "O people of the Dîn, O helpers of Guidance and Truth, may Allâh have mercy on you. Know that Allâh's mercy cannot be attained except through action and intention. It is not achieved through sinning and empty hopes without pleasing actions. None enters Jannah except through pious deeds coupled with Allâh's mercy. Allâh does not shower his mercy and infinite forgiveness except on the patient and true ones. Have you never heard Allâh's words as follows:

وَعَدَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ
فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ كَمَا ٱسْتَخْلَفَ ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ
دِينَهُمُ ٱلَّذِى ٱرْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّنۢ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا ۚ
يَعْبُدُونَنِى لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِى شَيْـًٔا ۚ وَمَن كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ
فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْفَٰسِقُونَ

Allâh has promised those amongst you who believe and do good deeds that He will grant them sovereignty over the Earth just as He had granted sovereignty to those before them. He will establish that religion which He is pleased with for them and change their condition of fear into safety. They worship Me and do not ascribe any partner unto Me. Those who will disbelieve after that are indeed great sinners. [24:55]

Be ashamed that Allâh should see you fleeing from your enemy. You are completely in His grip, there is no refuge except with him."

He continued speaking in this manner until he returned to his post.

Suhayl bin 'Amr ﷺ then went armed and riding on his horse giving similar advice as Mu'â<u>th</u> ﷺ had given. He then returned.

Abû Sufyân ﷺ then made the rounds on horseback with his sword and spear. He said, "O Noble 'Arabs, O great chiefs, you awoke this morning in the land of the Christians, cut off from family and homeland. By Allâh! Nothing can save you from them except the thrust of the spear dead in their eyes and the strike of the sword on their heads. In this way you will attain your purpose and gain success from your Rabb. Know that Allâh removes worry at the time of battle through patience. So be true in battle for victory comes with patience. If you are patient you will rule their lands and cities and enslave their children and women. If you flee, then there is only an endless wilderness ahead of you which cannot be traversed except with an ample supply of provisions and water, and where you return to has neither buildings nor palaces. So attack with your swords and wage Jihâd in the Path of Allâh as it should be waged."

وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ

Do not die except as Muslims. [3:102]

He left the men and went to the women on top of the hill. They included Muhâjirât, the daughters of the An<u>s</u>âr and other Muslim women. With them were their children. He said to them, "Rasûlullâh ﷺ has said that women are deficient in intelligence and Dîn. Nevertheless, you should be of those women who uphold their Dîn and resolve upon that; those who encourage their husbands to battle; those who will stone their

own husbands in the face and strike their horses with tent-pegs if they should flee from battle. They will show their children to them until they return in shame."

The women stood up as ready tigresses roaring out their war-poems. Abû Sufyân ﷺ returned to his station and said, "O Muslims, you see what has come to you, Rasûlullâh ﷺ and Jannah are in front and the Devil and Hell are behind you."

He continued until he reached his post.

47) Convey my salâm to Rasûlullâh ﷺ

Thus the plot of Bannes failed. Khâlid ﷺ and his 500 cavalry confronted the Romans who took fright and withdrew. That gave the Muslims ample time to form their rows and battalions.

Bannes said, "What is stopping you from fighting them? Go and attack them." They thus returned to the attack. Khâlid ﷺ saw the massive army coming.

Bannes selected 30,000 of his elite warriors and had them dig ditches at the right-wing. They jumped in, shackled their feet with chains and tied each ten together with a single chain. They swore upon Jesus son of Mary, the Cross, the priests, the monks and the four churches not to flee until every last one of them would be killed. When Khâlid ﷺ saw that, he said to the elite troops around him, "This is going to be a heavy day. O Allâh, grant the Muslims victory."

He then went to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and said, "O commander, the enemy have tied themselves in chains and are advancing with cutting swords. This may be a heavy day on the Muslims."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O Muslims, the enemy is numerous and nothing can save you except patience. Abû Sulaymân, what is your view?

Bannes put 100,000 such men in front who were known for their bravery, were famous amongst the citizens and were known for their firmness in their own lands. Khâlid ﷺ recognised them to be great warriors. He replied, "I think that Sa'îd bin Zayd should stay at your station and you go at the back with 200 or 300 Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. The people will then feel ashamed to flee firstly because of shame before Allâh and secondly because of shame before you." Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ accepted this advice and called Sa'îd ﷺ, one of the ten who were promised Jannah. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ put him in charge and then chose 200 Yamanî horsemen which included Muhâjirîn ﷺ and Ansâr ﷺ and stayed in the rear in line with Sa'îd ﷺ

Waraqah bin Muhalhil aṯ-Tannûkhî, the flag-bearer of Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ at al-Yarmûk narrates:

The first to open the gates of battle at al-Yarmûk was a young, handsome Azdî boy who said to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "O commander, I desire to quench my heart's thirst to wage Jihâd against my enemy and the enemy of Islâm and to sacrifice my life in the Path of Allâh so that I can be blessed with martyrdom. Permit me to go and if you have any message for Rasûlullâh ﷺ tell me."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ began weeping and said, "Convey my salâm to Rasûlullâh ﷺ and tell him that we have found what our Rabb has promised us to be true."

The boy then rode off to the battlefield. A Roman riding on a grey horse came to challenge him. The boy who had dedicated his life to the Path of Allâh went to him and recited this poem as he neared him:

I will certainly pierce and cut.
With every spear and sword that will cut.
Perhaps I will be successful and gain this
Jannah and high status.

They then fought. The boy speared the Roman and brought him to the ground. He took all his gear and horse and gave it to one of his tribesman. He then returned to the battlefield. A second, third and fourth came against him but the Azdî boy killed them all one by one. The fifth however, martyred the boy. The tribe of Azd became infuriated and charged at the Romans who in turn charged like a swarm of locusts until they came near the Muslim right-wing.

48) The Battle of al-Yarmûk begins in earnest

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called out, "The enemies of Allâh have come against you. Repulse them. Know that Allâh is with you. Be firm with patience and truth and confront the enemy. Victory is only from Allâh!"

He then gazed at the sky and prayed, "O Allâh, you alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help. We take You to be One and do not ascribe any partners unto You. These people are your enemies. They deny You and Your signs and ascribe a son unto You. O Allâh, shake their feet and tremble their hearts. Send down calmness upon us. Make us firm in the word of piety. Save us from Your punishment.

O You Who do not break promises, O Allâh, help us against them, O You Who has said in His Honourable Book:

وَٱعْتَصِمُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ هُوَ مَوْلَىٰكُمْ ۖ فَنِعْمَ ٱلْمَوْلَىٰ وَنِعْمَ ٱلنَّصِيرُ

Hold firmly onto Allâh. He is your Master. What an excellent Master! What an excellent Helper. [22:78]

While he was engaged in this du'â the Romans attacked the right-wing which was made up of al-Azd, Mathhij, Hadramawt and Khawlân tribes. The Roman attack was vicious but the Muslims persevered as noble ones do. They fought back fiercely and remained firm. They remained firm when a second Roman battalion attacked, but were dislodged at the attack of the third battalion.

'Amr bin Ma'dîkarab az-Zubaydî ﷺ then rushed out. He was the chief of Zubayd who honoured him for the great bravery he displayed even since pre-Islamic times. At the Battle of al-Yarmûk he was 120 years old, but his vigour had not slackened in the least. Upon seeing his tribe fleeing, he called out, "O people of Zubayd! O people of Zubayd, you flee from the enemy and fear to drink from the goblet of death? Do you prefer blame and disgrace for yourself? What is this commotion of the Christian dogs to you? Do you not know that Allâh is watching you, the Mujâhidîn and the patient ones? When He sees them being patient for the sake of His pleasure and then remain firm on His decision He helps them with victory and patience. How can you flee away from Jannah? Do you like deficiency, entry into Hell and the anger of the Great Compeller?"

Upon hearing him Zubayd ran to him as a she-camel runs to her children. About 500 horsemen and footmen gathered around him and together charged at the Romans. Himyar, Khawlân and Hadramawt joined them in a heavy assault which dislodged the Romans from their positions.

The Daws tribe were with Abû Hurayrah ﷺ. He was waving his flag encouraging his tribe to fight and said, "O people, hurry towards the embrace of the virgin damsels of Jannah in the vicinity of the Rabb of all the worlds! There is no place more beloved unto Allâh than this place (the battlefield). Hear me, Allâh gives preference to the patient ones over those who have not participated in battle."

So Daws gathered around him and launched an attack on the Romans. Combat ensued and rotated amongst them just as a windmill rotates.

49) Bravery of the women

The Romans began to gang up on the right-wing which broke up and fled like sheep fleeing from a lion. When the Muslim women saw the Muslim cavalry retreating they screamed, "O daughters of 'Arabs, get those men. Stop them from fleeing and send them back into battle!"

Sa'îdah bint 'Âsim al-Khawlânî narrates:

I was amongst those women that day on the hill. When the right-wing fled 'Affirah bint Ghifâr who was as brave as a man shouted, " O women of the 'Arabs, get those men. Carry your children to them and make them fight."

The women began stoning the the men. Bint al-'As bin Munabbih called out, "May Allâh disfigure that man who flees from his wife."

The women began shouting at their husbands, "You are not our husbands if you cannot defend us from the Christians!"

Al-'Abbâs bin Sahl as-Sâ'idî narrates:

Khawlah bint al-Azwar, Khawlah bint Tha'labah al-Ansârîyah, Ka'ûb bint Mâlik bin 'Âsim, Salâm bint Hâshim, Ni'am bint Fayyâd, Hind bint 'Utbah bin Rabî'ah and Lubnâ bint Jarîr al-Himyarîyah came leading the women with their girdles tied. They were carrying sticks. Khawlah recited:

يا هاربًا عن نسوة ثقات   لها جمال ولها ثبات
تسلموهن إلى الهنات   تملك نواصينا مع البنات
أعلاج سوء فسق عتات   ينلن منا أعظم الشتات

O you who flees from his loyal lady
She is beautiful and stands firmly
Your abandoning them to disbelievers is

to let them the forelocks and girls seize
Disbelievers, evil, arrogant, sinful
will take what they want from us to the full.

The horsemen then turned back encouraging each other to fight. Those who were fleeing returned en masse upon hearing the women.

Hind bin 'Utbah came carrying a stick followed by Muhâjirât. She recited the same poem she recited at Uhud:

نحن بنات طارق   نمشي على النمارقِ
مشي القطا الموافق   قيدي مع المرافق
ومن أبى نفارق   أن تغلبوا نمالق
أو تدبروا نفارق   فراق غير وامق
هل من كريم عاشق   يحمي عن العواتق

Night star's daughters are we
Who walk on carpets soft they be.
Our walk does friendliness tell
Our heads are perfumed musk smell
Pearls are strung around these necks of us.
So come and embrace us.
Whoever refuses will be separated forever.
To defend his woman is there no noble lover?

She came to the Muslim horsemen of the right-wing and called out, "Why are you fleeing? Do you flee from Allâh and Jannah when Allâh is watching you?" When she saw her husband Abû Sufyân ﷺ fleeing, she struck his horse in the face with a tent-peg and said, "Where do you think you are going, O Sakhr? Go back to battle and put great effort into it until you compensate for having incited people in the past against Rasûlullâh ﷺ."

Az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwâm ﷺ narrates:

I heard Hind mentioning to Abû Sufyân ﷺ about Uhud when we were with Rasûlullâh ﷺ. Her words made him turn back to the battle.The other Muslims

followed him. I looked at the women. They attacked with the men, in fact they overtook the men. They stood between the legs of the horses hitting the enemy with tent-pegs. I saw a woman grabbing a massive Roman who was mounted on a horse. She clung onto him and would not let go until she had dismounted him and killed him and said, "This is the manifestation of Allâh's help to the Muslims."

Az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwâm ﷺ narrates:

The Muslims mounted a heavy attack, desiring nothing besides Allâh's pleasure. The Azd fought under Abû Hurayrah ﷺ. Death spread amongst them until a large number lay dead. That was because they had borne the brunt of the initial impact and therefore there were more martyrs from them than from others.

50) Trajan is killed

Sa'îd bin Zayd narrates:

The fighting at the right-wing was intense. Sometimes the Muslims fled and then returned. Sometimes we persevered and sometimes we fell back. Khâlid ﷺ looked at the right-wing whose retreat had already reached the centre. He called the 6,000 horsemen around him and, proclaiming, "Allâhu Akbar!", launched such a ferocious attack which caused heavy damage to the Romans. They were forced to withdraw from the right-wing and centre and retreat to their positions. Khâlid ﷺ went to the front of their ranks driving off any of them close to the Muslims and thus broke their ranks.

Khâlid ﷺ saw that his men were now spread out. He thus called out, "O people of Islâm and Faith, O bearers of the Qurân, O Sahâbah of Muhammad ﷺ, defeat has become apparent to the Romans. They have no strength or power left except that which you see. Allâh has blunted their sharpness so attack and complete their defeat. May Allâh have mercy on you. By Him who hold Khâlid's life in His Hand! I have hope that Allâh will put them in your hands." The Muslims responded from every direction, "Attack and we will attack with you."

He unsheathed his sword and attacked, followed by his men.

'Abdurahmân bin al-Humaydî al-Jumahî narrates:

I was amongst those who attacked with Khâlid ﷺ. By Allâh! The Roman formations were broken and they fled like sheep flee from a lion. The Muslims then continued

in pursuit of them. That assault was on the Roman right-wing which was completely smashed. As for the chained ones who were the defenders of Rome, they maintained their positions and shot arrows at us.

'Abdurahmân narrates:

Khâlid ﷺ led us in the attack. Our battle-cry was: "Victory to the Ummah of Muhammad!" Khâlid ﷺ advanced continuously until we reached Trajan. He was in the place Bannes had stationed him in. He had with him the jewelled cross and was surrounded by his men waiting for him to launch the attack.

When Khâlid ﷺ reached him the patricians said to Trajan, "Sir, you should attack and we will follow you or else flee for the 'Arabs have surrounded you."

Trajan : Today is an evil day. I do not like it. I do not even like to see it or be present here. The king posted me here and I just hate it! Wrap my face and head in this cloth so that I do not have to see the battle.

So they wrapped his head and face in brocade. The people fought on until the Muslims defeated the Romans. His head and face was still wrapped in brocade. Dirâr ﷺ attacked and killed him.

51) Women to the rescue - again

Amongst Allâh's favours to the Muslims was the in-fighting between George and Canter. George was in command of the right-wing with the Armenians and Canter of the left-wing. George said to him, "Attack the 'Arabs. This is not the time to tarry."

Canter : You order me to attack? Why do you not go yourself?

George : Why should I not order you? I am your commander.

Canter : You lie! You are but a general and I am in command over you. You are my subordinate.

So they squabbled. George, angry and frustrated, left and attacked the Muslims between the left-wing and centre. He attacked the tribes of Qays, Kinânah, Khath'am, Juthâm, Qudâ'ah, 'Âmilah and Ghassân. The Muslims were dislodged and fled except for the flag-bearers who put up tough resistance. The Romans chased the fleeing Muslims until they entered their camp with them.

The Muslim women came and hit the horses of the Muslims in the face with tent-pegs and stones and called out, "O men of Islam, do you flee from your mothers, sisters, wives and daughters? Do you wish to give us to the Christians?"

Minhâl ad-Dawsî narrates:

The women were sterner against us than the Romans were. The Muslims returned from their flight saying to each other,

وَتَوَاصَوْاْ بِٱلْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْاْ بِٱلصَّبْرِ

And they advise each other with Truth and they advise each other with patience. [103:3]

They turned back and fiercely fought the Romans. Qatâmah bin al-Aysham al-Kinânî was in the lead striking the Christians sometimes with a sword and sometimes with a spear until he broke three spears. All the while he was reciting:

سأحمل في الروم الكلاب النوابح　　وأضربهم ضربًا بحدّ الصفائح
وأرضي رسول الله خير مؤمل　　نبي الهدى للدين أشرف ناصح

I will attack the dogs of Rome who are barking,
With my metal's edge I will be striking.
To please the giver of hope, Allâh's Messenger,
Prophet of Guidance for this Dîn the best advisor.

He attacked until he broke two swords. Each time he broke a sword or spear he would call out, "Who will lend me a sword or spear in the Path of Allâh and his reward will be from Allâh?"

He then called out, "O tribe of Qays, grab your share of reward and patience. For patience in this world is honour, and leads to mercy and status in the next world."

ٱصْبِرُواْ وَصَابِرُواْ وَرَابِطُواْ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

Be patient, help one another in patience and defend each other.
And fear Allâh so that you may be successful. [3:200]

His people responded and were energised for battle.

Qatâmah bin al-Aysham narrates:

I had never experienced an attack like that of Canter and his men before. They attacked until our two armies became completely intermingled.

(This would indicate that Canter must have attacked after George - translator's note).

Khâlid ﷺ returned from his raid with 2,000 men. They had killed so many Romans but it had had no effect due to their great number. He found the people saying, "May Allâh reward Qatâmah bin al-Aysham well on behalf of Islâm." So he went and thanked him too.

52) Martyrdom of 'Âmir bin at-Tufayl ﷺ

Thar'ah bint al-Harith came down from the hill, saying, "What did Khâlid do?" until she came in front of him.

Thar'ah : Ibn al-Wâlid, you are of the noble 'Arabs. Men follow their leaders. If the leaders are firm then so are they with them. If the leaders flee, so do they.

Khâlid ﷺ : I never fled! We continuously fought them.

Thar'ah accepted his explanation, "Then may Allâh disfigure the face of he who sees his commander steadfast and yet he flees."

Bannes, may Allâh's curse be on him, looked at his right-wing which was in a stagnant state. He sent a messenger to encourage them. Thereupon a Roman wearing complete armour emerged on a giant grey horse. The Roman came as if he were a mountain between the two forces and issued a challenge. When an Azdî responded he was martyred in a single round of combat. The Roman issued another challenge which Mu'âth bin Jabal ﷺ wanted to take up, but Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ forbade him saying, "Keep your place and maintain the flag for that is preferable to me than your dueling him."

Mu'â<u>th</u> ﷺ therefore kept his place and called out, "O Muslims, whoever wants a horse to go and fight in the Path of Allâh may take my horse and weapons." His son, 'Abdura<u>h</u>mân, came and said, "O father, me!" This pre-adolescent boy put on the weapons and mounted the horse and then said, "Father, I am going to that Christian. If I am patient and attain victory then that is Allâh's favour. If I am killed then I greet you now already and ask you if you have any message for Rasûlullâh ﷺ?"

Mu'â<u>th</u> ﷺ : My son, convey my salâm to him and say, "May Allâh reward you well on behalf of the Ummah." My son, go! May Allâh guide you towards that which He likes.

Ibn Mu'â<u>th</u> went and attacked the Roman who struck him on the head, cutting through his turban and breaking through until blood flowed. The Roman thought that the boy was almost dead and went back to see how he would fall from his horse. Ibn Mu'â<u>th</u> used the opportunity to return to the Muslims.

Mu'â<u>th</u> ﷺ : My son, what has happened to you?

Ibn Mu'â<u>th</u> : The disbeliever has killed me.

Mu'â<u>th</u> ﷺ : What do you want of this world, my son?

He then bandaged his head. At that moment the Roman arrogantly came to attack, but the Azd repulsed him.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Which of you will go to him?

'Âmir bin a<u>t</u>-<u>T</u>ufayl ad-Dawsî ﷺ volunteered. He was one of Khâlid's ﷺ flag-bearers at the Battle of Yamâmah. There he had dreamt that a woman came to him and exposed herself. He entered her and when his son saw that he also wanted to follow, but at the moment 'Âmir awoke. He narrated the dream to the Muslims, none of whom could interpret it. Âmir then said, "I know its interpretation."

"What is it, Ibn a<u>t</u>-<u>T</u>ufayl?" they asked him.

'Âmir ﷺ : It means that I will be killed. The woman whom I entered represents the Earth. My son will then be wounded and soon join me.

He fought at Yamâmah but did not suffer anything and returned safely.

Now at al-Yarmûk he went out to fight the Roman as if he were a blazing fire or striking lightning. He thrust his spear, which he had used in many battles, against the Romans. When it broke he unsheathed his sword, brandished it and struck the Roman

on the shoulder right down to the intestines. He fell off his horse and died. 'Âmir ﷺ raced back with the Roman horse and handed it to his son. He then returned to attack different groups of Romans.

He then targeted the Christian 'Arabs. He killed one horseman and issued a challenge for a duel. Jabalah himself responded. He was resplendent in brocade decorated with gold. Beneath that he wore armour of the ancient Tubba' and wore a helmet which glittered like the sun. Riding his horse which was descended from the horses of ancient 'Âd, he called out to 'Âmir ﷺ, "From which tribe are you?"

'Âmir ﷺ : Daws.

Jabalah : Then you are a relative. Save yourself and return. Give up false hopes.

'Âmir ﷺ : I have identified myself to you, so now you tell me what kind of an 'Arab you are.

Jabalah : I am of Ghassân. I am chief of all of them. I am Jabalah bin al-Ayham al-Ghassânî. I came out to you when I saw you coming. You had killed that strong patrician who was the equal to Bannes and George in bravery. I recognised you to be my equal and came to kill you and enjoy the favour of Bannes and Heraclius for killing you.

'Âmir ﷺ : You mention these people's strength, but Allâh is stronger than them and destroys the tyrants. You want to enjoy the favour of created beings like yourself for killing me, but I want to enjoy the favour of the Rabb of all the worlds for killing you.

He then attacked but his blow was harmless. Jabalah however struck him on the head right down to his shoulder. 'Âmir ﷺ fell down martyred. Jabalah swelled with pride and challenged the Muslims to duel him.

53) Martyrdom of Jundub bin 'Âmir

The martyr's son, Jundub bin 'Âmir, went to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ carrying his father's flag and said, "O commander, my father has been killed. I want to either avenge him or be killed myself. So give his flag to whom you will from amongst the Daws."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ handed the flag to a Dawsî and Jundub departed to kill Jabalah, reciting this poem:

سأبذل مهجتي أبدًا لأني   أريد العفو من رب كريم
وأضرب في العدا جهدي بسيفي   وأقتل كل جبار لئيم
فإن الخلد في الجنات حق   تباح لكل مقدام سليم

I will spend my life and soul,
Desiring the forgiveness of the Rabb of all.
I will with my sword strike the enemy,
Killing every despicable personality.
Eternity in Paradise is a reality
Permissible for every man of bravery.

He then reached Jabalah.

Jundub : Stay, O murderer of my father, so that I can kill you.

Jabalah : You are really related to him?

Jundub : I am most certainly his son.

Jabalah : Why do you people just kill yourselves, your children and sacred lives?

Jundub : To be slain in the Path of Allâh is praiseworthy according to Allâh and a means of elevation of status.

Jabalah : I do not want to kill you.

Jundub : How can I return when I am stricken by the loss of my father? By Allâh! I shall not return until I have either avenged him or meet him.

He then attacked Jabalah. The two then dueled with everyone watching. Jabalah realised that Jundub was a great warrior and became more cautious. The Ghassân were cheering their chief on but then realised that Jundub was overpowering him. They therefore said to each other, "This boy who has come out against your chief is of high birth. If you leave him alone he will overcome Jabalah. So let us help him." They therefore got ready to help Jabalah. The Muslims were pleased at Jundub's valiant display. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ watched and wept. He said, "This is a person who sacrifices his life in the Path of Allâh. O Allâh, accept his action."

Jâbir bin 'Abdillâh ﷺ narrates:

I participated in the Battle of al-Yarmûk and did not see a boy braver than Jundub bin 'Âmir bin at-Tufayl when he was fighting Jabalah. He struck Jabalah a blow which weakened him, but Jabalah struck back and killed him and Allâh sped his soul to Jannah. Thus his father's dream became a reality.

Jabalah stayed at his place of combat and challenged the Muslims. His people called out, "Return to us. You have fulfilled your duty." He returned, proud of himself, until he came under his cross. Bannes sent a message congratulating him.

54) The Battle-cries and numbers of Muslims

The Muslims were greatly distressed at the loss of 'Âmir ﷺ and Jundub. Daws called out, "Jannah, Jannah, avenge your chief, 'Âmir!" Their allies, al-Azd, came to their assistance and together they attacked Ghassân, Lakhm and Juthâm, reciting poems. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called out, "O people," He then recited,

وَسَارِعُوٓاْ إِلَىٰ مَغۡفِرَةٖ مِّن رَّبِّكُمۡ وَجَنَّةٍ

Hasten to your Rabb's forgiveness and Paradise... [3:133]

He then continued, "...and the embrace of the virgin damsels in gardens of pleasure. There is no place more beloved to Allâh than this (battlefield). Hear me, Allâh grants preference to those who have partaken in battle over those who have not."

Upon hearing this al-Azd together with the Daws attacked. Their battle-cry that day was, "Jannah, Jannah!"

Mûsâ bin Muhammad narrates from 'Atâ bin Murâd:

I asked many people as to the different battle-cries of the Muslims at al-Yarmûk. I was told as follows:

1) Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ	***Make them die! Make them die!***
2) 'Abs tribe	***Come help O 'Abs!***
3) Yaman	***O helpers of Allâh!***
4) Khâlid ﷺ and his men	***O party of Allâh!***

5) Himyar	***Victory! Victory!***
6) Dârim & Sakâsik tribes	***Patience! Patience!***
7) Banû Murâd	***O help of Allâh, come down!***

These were the battle-cries. When Daws followed by al-Azd attacked the Christian 'Arabs they targeted the cross; they scattered the Christians and reached it. A Muslim speared the Ghassânî who was carrying the cross, both of which fell down from the horse. The dead of al-Azd and Daws were but like a white spot on a black camel. Ghassân returned to retrieve their cross. Intense fighting broke out and many were killed.

Hishâm bin 'Ammârah narrated to me from Abû al-Jarîrî who narrates from Nâfi' who narrates from Jubayr bin al-Huwayrith who narrates from 'Abdullâh bin 'Adî:

I participated at al-Yarmûk and the Muslims numbered 25,000.

Al-Huwayrith became angry at this report and said, "Whoever narrated this has lied! The Muslims were 41,000. I have narrated what I have heard from reliable narrators."

This last report is most correct because there were 32,000 Muslims at Ajnâdayn and reinforcements arrived after that.

Ibn Abî Namirah narrates from 'Abdul Hamîd bin Sahl who narrates from his grandfather:

When al-Azd and Daws attacked the Christians at al-Yarmûk the Christians counter-attacked and dislodged the Muslims. The Muslim flag-bearer, 'Iyâd bin Ghanam al-Ash'arî, fled with the flag in his hand. They shouted at him, "An army only stays firm if the flag-bearer stays firm."

Khâlid ﷺ and 'Amr bin al-Âs ﷺ raced to take the flag off him. 'Amr ﷺ snatched it and fought until the Romans were defeated and Allâh granted the Muslims victory.

55) Another day of battle

The third day was the worst. The Muslims lost and fled three times. Each time it was the women who had to stall them by showering them with stones and striking them

with tent-pegs and by showing them their children. They returned and fought until the night when the Romans returned to their camp. The Romans suffered heavy losses, the Muslims had few dead but arrows wounded many of them. Both parties returned to their camps, spending the night fully-armed.

The Muslim's first priority was Salâh, only then did they bandage the wounded. After Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ performed his salâh, he called out, "O people, when things are difficult then await relief from Allâh. Light your fires and be on guard. Keep reciting, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" "

He and Khâlid ﷺ then inspected the wounded saying, "O people, your enemies are in pain just as you are in pain, but you have hope from Allâh, which they do not have."

The two continued going round to the Muslims until morning.

Bannes withdrew the Romans to the banks of al-Yarmûk. He gathered all the patricians, severely rebuked them and said, "I just knew that this would come from you. I saw how weak-hearted, cowardly and terrified you are of these weak 'Arabs!" They offered excuses and said, "Tomorrow we will fight them. There are still many fresh soldiers who have not yet fought. Tomorrow we will show them and be victorious." Bannes stopped scolding them and ordered them to begin their preparations. Thus both parties spent the night on guard against each other. The difference was that the Romans were afraid because of their heavy losses while the Muslims hearts were even firmer due to their faith and steadfastness.

In the morning Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ led the Muslims in Salâtul Khawf. Suddenly crosses and flags as numerous as trees and thorns appeared. It seemed as if they were fresh troops who had not been afflicted with battle yet. Bannes had his throne placed on the same sandhill which he was on the previous day and swiftly drew his men into formation.

When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ saw the sudden speed of the Romans, he ordered every commander to get his men ready for battle. After Salâh the Muslims rushed to put on their weapons and mounted their horses. Each commander took up his position and began advising his men and mentioning the help of Allâh.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ went between the ranks describing to the Muslims the great virtues of Jihâd and what Allâh has kept in store for the patient Mujâhidîn. He put 'Amr bin Sa'îd bin 'Abdillâh in charge of the children, women and goods and appointed 500 archers each at the right-wing, left-wing and centre. He went amongst them and said,

"O archers, keep firmly to your positions. If you see the enemy attacking us then shower them with arrows taking the name of Allâh. Do not fire sporadically but as if every arrow was fired from a single bow. If they should charge at you, maintain your position until further orders from me."

They complied with what they had been ordered to do.

Abû Sufyân ﷺ went to his son, Yazîd ﷺ. Yazîd's ﷺ men surrounded their commander who was holding the flag and had resolved on attacking the enemy and waging Jihâd.

Abû Sufyân ﷺ : My son, if you do good Allâh will be good to you. Fear Allâh as He should be feared. Help the Dîn of Allâh and the laws of his Prophet ﷺ. Beware of being afraid because what our Rabb decrees He implements. Be patient with your men – patience of the highest degree. Beware, I repeat beware of deserting for then Allâh's wrath will afflict you.

Yazîd ﷺ : I will persevere to the limits of my ability. I ask Allâh to help me.

56) Bravery of az-Zubayr ﷺ

Yazîd ﷺ then waved the flag and called his men to battle. They attacked the nearest Roman force and remained in combat until they caused them major damage. This attack emanated from the centre and continued until a patrician came with a massive spear in hand. He wore a gold cross and led a force of about 10,000 cavalry. This cavalry attacked the right-wing which was under 'Amr bin al-'Âs. Some Muslims fled and the Romans managed to enter the first ranks around 'Amr ﷺ. Those around 'Amr ﷺ fought back. Sometimes they gained the upper hand and at times fell back.

The Romans amassed against the Muslims and pushed them back until they pressed them right against the hill upon which the women were stationed. They then proceeded to surround the hill.

A woman called out, "Where are the helpers of the Dîn? Where are the defenders of the Muslims?"

Az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwâm ﷺ was sitting with his wife, Asmâ bint Abî Bakr, having his inflamed eyes treated. Upon hearing a woman shout, "Where are the helpers of

the Dîn?" he asked, "O Asmâ, why is that woman shouting, 'Where are the helpers of the Dîn?' "

Asmâ : She is 'Afîrah bint 'Uthmân. O son of Rasûlullâh's ﷺ aunt, the Muslim right-wing has been defeated. The Romans have forced them to take refuge here by us and have surrounded us. The Ansâr's women are calling for the helpers of the Dîn.

Az-Zubayr ؓ : By Allâh! I am a helper of the Dîn. Allâh will not see me sitting at a time like this.

Then he flung the patch off his eye and mounted his horse. He took with him his spear which bore the same name as himself and attacked calling out, "I am Az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwâm ؓ. I am the son of the aunt of Rasûlullâh ﷺ!"

He began to incessantly spear the Romans until they turned and fled.

Layth bin Jâbir narrates:

Allâh be praised for az-Zubayr ؓ. He single-handedly routed the Romans. He attacked them with not a single 'Arab at his side until they fled to their camp and 'Amr and his men returned. 'Amr called out, "Return, Return! Be firm, Be firm! O people of Islâm! Patience,Patience!" So they returned after having fled.

George the Armenian, together with 30,000 Armenians, attacked Shurahbîl bin Hasanah ؓ, the scribe of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, and dislodged the Sahâbah ؓ from their position. Only Shurahbîl ؓ himself and less than 500 of his men remained firm. He attacked the Armenians calling out, "O people of Islâm, do not flee from death. Patience, Patience!" His men came rushing back and attacked the Armenians so fiercely that they fled, suffering far more than they had afflicted on the Muslims.

Shurahbîl ؓ returned to his position, surrounded by his men. He rebuked them for their behaviour in battle, saying, "What befell you that you fled from these disbelievers whereas you are the defenders of the Dîn, you are the pious, the people of the Qurân and the slaves of the Most Merciful. Have you not heard the words of Allâh:

وَمَن يُوَلِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ دُبُرَهُۥٓ إِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِّقِتَالٍ أَوْ مُتَحَيِّزًا إِلَىٰ فِئَةٍ

فَقَدْ بَآءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ وَمَأْوَىٰهُ جَهَنَّمُ ۖ وَبِئْسَ ٱلْمَصِيرُ

Whoever turns away from the enemy on the day of battle, except for a war - strategy or to retreat to his troops, has drawn the wrath of Allâh upon him and his abode is Hell - what an evil destination that is! [8:16]

Allâh also says,

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ ٱشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ
وَأَمْوَٰلَهُم بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ ٱلْجَنَّةَ

Allâh has bought the lives and wealth of theBelievers in return for Paradise. [9:111]

Yet you fled?"

Muslims : O Sahâbi of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, the Devil made us slip just as he did at Uhud and Hunayn. Here we are now before you. So take us and attack.

Shurahbîl ﷺ thanked them and positioned them adjoining the force of Sa'îd bin Zayd ﷺ to facilitate better defence.

57) The giant

When Qays bin Hubayrah saw Shurahbîl's ﷺ men returning he led his men in an attack. They called out their battle-cry:

"O help of Allâh come down! O victorious one make them die!"

Khâlid ﷺ attacked from the right while Qays attacked from the left, and they fought most fiercely. Praise be to Allâh for az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwâm ﷺ, Hâshim bin al-Mirqâl and Khâlid ﷺ. They attacked so viciously that they neared the tents of Bannes. Bannes jumped off his throne out of fright and shouted at his men and rebuked them. They returned to fight.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called out to Sa'îd bin Zayd ﷺ who then attacked with his men. He shouted:

"There is no deity besides Allâh! O victorious one make them die!"

They advanced to spread death amongst the Romans.

While the Muslims were attacking they heard someone call out,

"O help of Allâh descend! O help of Allâh be near! O people, steadfastness! Steadfastness!"

'Âmir bin Aslam says, "We investigated and found it to be Abû Sufyân ﷺ who was with his son, Yazîd ﷺ. They stood under Abû Sufyân's flag."

The generals all fought a vicious battle against whoever was closest to them. The most steadfast of all the Romans were the chained-ones who warded off whoever came near to them. Their archers numbered 100,000. When they fired arrows at the 'Arabs they would cover the sun. Were it not for Allâh's help the Muslims would have been utterly destroyed. The Muslims on their part were joyous while most of the Romans perished.

A Christian came forward whose calves resembled that of the trunks of palm-trees. He wore gold armour and a golden helmet on top of which was a gold cross, studded with jewels. Mounted on a grey horse, he wore iron chain-mail and carried a spear. He roamed about and challenged the Muslims to duel him. The Muslims could but stare at his massive, frightening appearance.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ said, "His appearance should not frighten you for how many massively-built men have you seen who have no heart? Who will go against him? You should all seek Allâh's help against him."

A slave went out on foot carrying a sword and shield. He was about to approach him when his master, Thul Kalâ' al-Himyarî ﷺ shouted at him to return. Thul Kalâ'ﷺ, who was a great warrior then went out himself.

The two faced each other, aiming their spears at each other. Each stabbed his opponent causing an injury which burned hotter than coals. They then withdrew their swords and began clashing. Each managed to strike the other once. However, the Roman's sword was sharp and his arm strong, so he had cut right through Thul Kalâ''s ﷺ shield, sword, armour and clothing until he penetrated and deeply wounded Thul Kalâ's ﷺ left upper arm and his hand dropped heavily.

Thul Kalâ'ﷺ turned back to the Muslims and managed to evade the Roman. His tribesmen came to him to find blood gushing out of his wound. He said, "O horsemen of Himyar, beware of relying on your weapons to save you in battle. Rather rely on Allâh Most Honourable and Majestic in your battle."

Himyarîs : How is that, O chief?

Thul Kalâ' ﷺ : I returned my slave out of pity for him because he had no armour and I said to myself, "I am a greater warrior than the slave and am better equipped and armoured," but now you can see what the uncircumcised Christian did to me. By Allâh! I have not experienced anything similar in previous battles. O men of Himyar, your chief has returned exhausted, who is there amongst you to avenge him?

A Himyarî horseman, wearing such Yamanî made and styled clothing which made him resemble embers, went and persistently attacked the Roman. In a heavy round of combat he managed to spear him through the chest and bring him to the ground, dead. Thus Allâh sped his soul to Hell.

The Himayrî wanted to dismount to retrieve the booty, but a large group of Romans came to prevent him. He turned them back in disgrace and got the booty. He went to give it to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who awarded it back to him. The Himayrî gave it to his tribesmen and returned to his post. There a second Roman came to attack him, but he killed him and similarly a third. However, the fourth assailant martyred him. As the fourth Roman dismounted to seize the Himayrî's spoils, an Ansârî archer shot him in the throat and Allâh sped his soul to Hell.

The Romans were thrown into confusion and terror at the loss of the fourth Roman for he was the governor of Nâblus and one of their great men. Bannes calmed them down.

58) The prince of Lân

Marius, prince of Lân, came and announced himself. He wore the upper-body armour of royalty, brocade and a jewel-studded belt. He declared, "I am the prince of Lân. None but your commander is worthy of fighting me."

Shurahbîl ﷺ came riding out, flag in hand. He wore iron armour and a leather belt. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ asked, "Who went?"

"Shurahbîl bin Hasanah," they replied.

So he sent a messenger to him, "Give the flag to whoever you like, but fight without the flag."

He gave the flag to one of his tribesmen and said, "Stay at my post with it. If he overcomes me then give it to the commander, Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ, so that he can give it to whom he likes. If I return I will take it from you." The man took the flag while Shurahbîl ؓ left reciting:

سأحمل في اللئام بني الأعادي   بكل مثقف لدن حداد
فيا بؤسا لقيصر يوم نأتي   وجمع الروم شرد في البلاد

I will attack the enemy's despicable offspring
with pliant iron good for rectifying.
Woe to Caesar on that day which is at hand
When we will come and make the Romans fugitives in the land.

Marius did not understand because he knew only a little 'Arabic.

Marius : O 'Arab, what are you saying?

Shurahbîl ؓ : I am reciting words which the 'Arabs recite at the time of battle to strengthen their hearts and bring conviction on Allâh's promise to our Prophet ﷺ.

Marius : What did He promise your Prophet?

Shurahbîl ؓ : Allâh promised us that He will conquer the length and breadth of the land for us. We will rule Syria. We will triumph through His aid.

Marius : God does not help the rebels. You have rebelled against us seeking that which you are not entitled to.

Shurahbîl ؓ : We are a nation commanded by Allâh to do this. The Earth belongs to Allâh. He grants it to whomsoever He desires to from amongst His slaves. The good result is always in favour of those who fear Him. I see that you know some 'Arabic. Were you to abandon the worship of the cross and enter Islâm you would be of the inhabitants of Paradise and most fortunate.

Marius : I will not leave the religion of Christ for it is the true religion.

Shurah̲bîl ﷺ : Do not say that he is a god or that he was crucified and killed. Allâh, Most Pure and High, kept him alive on Earth for as long as it pleased Him and then raised him to the Heavens.

Marius : I will never retract!

He then took a cross out from his neck, raised it, placed it on his eye, kissed it and sought its blessings for help. This made Shurah̲bîl ﷺ angry.

Shurah̲bîl ﷺ : Woe unto you! Destruction unto you, to those who are with you and to those who say as you say.

He then attacked and a heavy battle ensued between the two with Muslims making du'â for Shurah̲bîl ﷺ. He realised that the Christian was extremely strong, so he turned back, pretending to flee. The enemy chased him and when he came near Shurahbîl ﷺ suddenly pulled the reins, spun around and attempted to spear him in the throat. The enemy dodged the spear and escaped unharmed and then called out, "O 'Arabs, you never leave trickery and scheming."

Shurah̲bîl ﷺ : Woe unto you! Do you not know that war is scheming and trickery is its very essence?

Marius : As if your trick helped you in any way.

They then fought until both of their swords broke and they began wrestling. The Christian was heavily built while Shurahbîl ﷺ was quite thin due to constant fasting and praying S̲alâh at night so when the Christian squeezed him he suffered much pain. The prince intended killing him there and then in his saddle. Both sides watched this spectacle.

D̲irâr ﷺ narrates:

We became very angry and I said to myself, "Woe unto you, O D̲irâr. That disbeliever is killing the scribe of the revelation of Rasûlullâh ﷺ while you stand and watch. What prevents you from helping him?"

D̲irâr ﷺ went running to them like a hungry deer leaping and reached them with neither of them aware of his presence. He stabbed the Christian from behind penetrating his heart and so the enemy fell down dead, releasing Shurah̲bîl ﷺ from his grip. After he fell off his horse, Shurah̲bîl ﷺ dismounted to take his upper-body armour, while D̲irâr ﷺ mounted the dead man's horse.

The two returned to the Muslim camp where the Muslims congratulated Shurahbîl ﵁ and thanked Dirâr ﵁. The two then argued over the upper-body armour.

Dirâr ﵁ : It is mine because I killed him.

Shurahbîl ﵁ : But I took it first.

They took their dispute to Abû 'Ubaydah ﵁ who feared to choose between the two, and so both were displeased. He therefore wrote to 'Umar ﵁ without naming the parties:

"A man went to duel a Christian and made great effort. Another Muslim came to help him and killed the Christian. So which of the two gets the spoils?"

'Umar ﵁ wrote back, *"The spoils are for the killer."*

Abû 'Ubaydah ﵁ then took the spoils from Shurahbîl ﵁ and gave then to Dirâr ﵁ saying:

ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ ٱللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَآءُ ۚ

That is Allâh's favour. He gives it to whom He wills. [5:54]

59) The day of losing one eye

The Romans were furious at the slaying of the prince of Lân. A brave horseman came to challenge the Muslims to fight. Az-Zubayr ﵁ accepted his challenge and killed him. A second, third and fourth came. He killed each in turn and took their spoils. Khâlid ﵁ then said to Abû 'Ubaydah ﵁, "Az-Zubayr has stripped the Romans clean and spends his life for Allâh and His Rasûl ﷺ. I fear that he is exhausted."

So Abû 'Ubaydah ﵁ called out to him to return upon oath and he then returned.The king of the North Europeans then came to fight. Khâlid ﵁ killed the king who was married to the daughter of the prince of Lân. His spoils, crown, belt, armour and cross were valued at 15,000 *(dirham or dînâr are not stated - translator's note).*

When Bannes was informed he became angry and exclaimed, "Two of our leaders killed in a single day. I do not think that Christ is helping us."

He then ordered the archers to fire simultaneously. They thus fired 100,000 arrows at the Muslims at the same time. The arrows fell down on the Muslims like hail falling down from the sky. The Muslims were severely wounded of which 700 lost one eye each. That day was therefore called the 'Day of Losing One Eye'.

Amongst those who lost an eye on that day were al-Mughîrah bin Shu'bah, Sa'îd bin Zayd bin 'Amr bin Nufayl at-Tamîmî, Abû Sufyân Sakhr bin Harb ﷺ and Râshid bin Sa'îd. Afterwards if anyone asked one of the one-eyed ones, "What afflicted your eye?" he would reply, "Do not call it an affliction, but it is a test from Allâh."

The arrows fell heavily on the Muslims until nothing could be heard save screams of "O my eye, my eye!" and they were thrown into heavy confusion. They thus grabbed their reins and returned.

The accursed Bannes saw the confusion amongst the Muslims and thus encouraged the archers. He then called out to the infantry. The chained ones then attacked, which resulted in frightening the already confused Muslims. George, Canter and Theodorus also came out to attack.

Bannes called out, "Be firm in your attack and shoot the 'Arabs with your arrows." The archers increased their shower of arrows and the chained ones came with their weapons in their hands flashing like lightning. They filled the field with war. The Muslims felt self-pity at the loss of their eyes and began to flee.

'Abbâd bin 'Âmir narrates:

I saw the army of Polytheism advancing and the Muslims retreating. I said, "There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty. O Allâh, send down Your help which You sent down to us in all the other places."

I then called out to the Himyar, "Do you flee from Jannah towards Hell? What is this fleeing? Do you not feel shame? Are you not in front of Allâh? Is He not the Knower of secrets but you flee from the Disbelievers?"

By Allâh! Not a single one of them replied. It was as if they had all gone deaf and could not hear. I said, "It is as if your tribe was born deaf" and started to call out to the other tribes. All were too busy to reply so I repeatedly recited, "There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty."

In a short while, Allâh's help came. This was when the Muslims fled to the hill and none remained firm except for the flag-bearers.

60) Once again...women to the rescue

'Abdullâh bin Qurt ﷺ narrates:

I witnessed all the battles but never saw anything as bad as the 'Day of Losing One Eye.' The horsemen retreated leaving the commanders to fight all by themselves, holding the flags in their hands. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ, 'Amr bin al-'Âs, al-Musayyib bin Najîyah al-Fazârî, 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr and al-Fadl bin al-'Abbâs were left fighting fiercely.

I said to myself, "How long can these men keep on fighting for when they are so few?"

Eventually those women who participated in the battles of Rasûlullâh ﷺ joined us in treating the wounded and giving water to drink and even joining the fight. I never saw the women of the Quraysh fighting with Rasûlullâh ﷺ or with Khâlid ﷺ at al-Yamâmah as much as they now fought at al-Yarmûk. When the attack came upon them and the Romans became intermingled with the Muslims, they all came out striking with swords.

The Muhâjirât became mixed with other tribes. The battle heated up and the women called out their tribal names, mother's names and their own titles. They fought, prepared to die. They hit the horses of the Muslims in the face with tent-pegs and showed them their children.

Some of them were fighting the enemy while others stopped the Muslims until they returned to fight the Disbelievers. Still others treated the wounded whilst others gave the men to drink.

The Romans charged at the women. The women of Lakhm, Juthâm and Khawlân fled. Khawlah bint al-Azwar, Umm Hakîm bint al-Hârith and Salamâ bint Luayy hit them on their faces and on their heads saying, "Yes, flee. Your presence only makes us weak!"

The women therefore returned to fight, prepared to die. Umm Hakîm bint al-Hârith stood in front of the horses with a sword in her hand. We could not hear any woman on that day clearer than her exhorting the Muslims, "O 'Arabs, mow their uncircumcised skins with swords!"

As for Asmâ bint Abî Bakr, she tied her reins to the reins of her husband, az-Zubayr bin al-'Awwâm ﷺ. Whenever he struck she would equal him.

The men returned to battle upon seeing the women fighting like that and said to each other, "If we do not fight then we are more entitled to sit in the women's quarters than the women!"

Praise be to Allâh at the way the Quraysh women fought at al-Yarmûk.

'Abdurahmân bin al-Fadl narrates from Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ who narrates from Makhûl:

The Battle of al-Yarmûk was fought in Rajab 15 Hijrî.

Abû 'Âmir narrates:

A disbeliever attacked us when Khawlah bint al-Azwar came and attacked him with a sword. He struck her forehead with his sword resulting in blood flowing and Khawlah fell to the ground. 'Afîrah bint 'Affân screamed when she saw this and called out, "By Allâh! Dirâr faces grief from his sister" and struck the Roman so hard with her sword that his head flew off and landed some distance away.

She took Khawlah's head into her lap. Khawlah's hair was soaked in blood.

'Afîrah : How are you?

Khawlah : If Allâh Most High wills then I will be fine but I am sure that I will die now. Can you get my brother, Dirâr, to come to me?

'Afîrah : O daughter of al-Azwar, I have not seen him.

Khawlah : O Allâh, make me the ransom for my brother's life and do not cause Islâm grief on account of him.

'Afîrah narrates:

Khawlah tried to get up but was unable to, so we carried her to her place. That same night I saw her running around giving the men to drink. It was if she had never experienced any pain. Her brother looked at her and saw her wounds still visible.

Dirâr ﷺ : What happened to you?

Khawlah : A Christian hit me and 'Afîrah killed him.

Dirâr ☙ : My sister, glad tidings of Jannah for I avenged your wound over and over again. I killed many of them.

61) Najm bin Mafrah and his eloquence

The battle started early that day and intensified as night neared. Abû 'Ubaydah ☙ fought upholding his flag and the other commanders followed his example until darkness separated the two parties. On the Day of Losing One Eye no less than 40,000 Romans were killed. It is reported from Khâlid ☙ that nine swords broke in his hand that day.

A participant of al-Yarmûk narrates that Khâlid ☙ killed 100 men.

Hâzim bin Ma'n narrates:

In the middle of the battle, Polytheists came riding out on grey and pie-bald horses as huge as mountains. They wore silk, brocade and protective armour. With a jewelled cross raised in their midst they attacked all at once, penetrating to the centre. Then their right-wing attacked our left-wing and their left-wing attacked our right-wing. The Muslims fell back to the women who began striking their own faces and wailing, "For Allâh's sake, for Allâh's sake! Do not bring grief to Islâm by fleeing. Fear your Rabb."

Najm bin Mafrah was with Abû 'Ubaydah ☙. He was one of the orators of the era, the most eloquent of all 'Arabs, the most brave-hearted of them and was loud-voiced and extremely handsome. The eloquent ones and 'Arabs would seek him out to hear his speech and verse.

'Abdul Malik bin Muhammad narrates from his father who narrates from Hassân bin Ka'b who narrates from 'Abdul Wahid who narrates from 'Awf who narrates from Mûsâ bin 'Imrân al-Yashkurî who narrates from Nasr bin Mâzin:

The boy, Najm bin Mafrah of the Banû Muhârib tribe, turned certain defeat into a victory for Islâm. He never spoke except in rhymed words which he constructed in an excellent manner. We memorised his verses at the Battle of al-Yarmûk. I have been informed that the latter scholars of eloquence and fluency such as al-Asam'î and

Abû 'Ubaydah, the linguist, would imitate his excellent speech. Amongst his exhortions to the Muslims at al-Yarmûk was this one at the time of their defeat: "This is the decisive day, there is no day thereafter. You all are witnessing it closely. Jannah is only earned by being patient upon that which is disliked. By Allâh! He who dislikes Jihâd will never attain it.

Allâh has a Jannah as large as the skies
But it is surrounded by that from which everyone shies.

The highest rank is the rank of martyrdom, so please the Knower of the invisible and visible. Hypocrisy is doing slow business in its markets so that hypocrisy is now hidden within hypocrisy. You are the Sahâbah of the Prophet of this era yet you are unfirm and despondent of victory. Gladden the soul of al-Mustafâ (the Chosen Prophet ﷺ) with your steadfastness and be resolute in your pure intentions. Beware of fleeing for then the fire of Hell and the anger of the Great Compelling King will become compulsory upon you. I swear by Him who decreed all things and rotates the sky on its rotation and by Whom everything is set, the virgin damsels of Jannah have decorated themselves for you. In their hands are jugs and cups of spring water. Whoever desires the Everlasting Abode will take lightly whatever he suffers here. Attack and you will attain your desires. Spear their chests and you will get the women of Jannah. Fix your spear-points and Jannah is yours. Be patient and you will be rewarded. Gladden the Muslims through your good deeds. Beware of losing the straight path for you will then join the disbelievers in Hell. Avoid what thay say and agree with what your predecessors did. Listen to what has been revealed in the Qurân because of them:

وَعَدَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّـٰلِحَـٰتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ
فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ كَمَا ٱسْتَخْلَفَ ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ
دِينَهُمُ ٱلَّذِى ٱرْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّنۢ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا ۚ
يَعْبُدُونَنِى لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِى شَيْـًٔا ۚ وَمَن كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ
فَأُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْفَـٰسِقُونَ

Allâh has promised those of you who believe and perform righteous deeds that He will grant them sovereignty over the Earth just as He granted it to those before them. He will establish for them their Dîn with which He is pleased for them. He will change their condition of fear into safety. They worship Me and do not ascribe any partners unto Me. Those who disbelieve after that are indeed great sinners. [24:55]

Hurry! The devoted ones have overtaken. Strive! The strivers have attained success.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ ٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِۦ

وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ

O you who believe fear Allâh as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims. [3:102]

62) The hair of Rasûlullâh ﷺ

Khâlid ﵁, wearing his red turban, attacked the Romans and scared them by shouting out his name, "I am Khâlid bin al-Walîd."

Nestor, a patrician, dressed in brocade came shouting and growling at him. He was busy fighting so he was unaware of what Nestor was saying. When he finally heard him babbling in Greek he attacked him. The two began a violent struggle. Suddenly Khâlid's ﵁ horse stumbled and fell with him falling on his head.

The Muslims called out, "There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty."

Khâlid ﵁ called out, "Alive! I am alive!"

Nestor then jumped on his back. His qalansuwah had fallen off, so he called out, "My qalansuwah! May Allâh have mercy on you." One of his Makhzûmî tribesmen rushed

and gave it to him. Later he was asked, "You were in such a state of combat, yet you were still worried about your qalansuwah?"

Khâlid ﷺ : When Rasûlullâh ﷺ shaved his head at his farewell pilgrimage, I took some of his hair. "What are you going to do with it?" he asked me. "O Rasûlullâh," I replied, "I will seek blesings through it and acquire help through it in fighting my enemies."

The Prophet ﷺ then said, "You will remain victorious for as long as it remains with you."

I therefore put the hairs in the front of my qalansuwah and have never confronted an army except that I have triumphed through the blessings of Rasûlullâh ﷺ.He tied the qalansuwah with his red turban and attacked Nestor. He struck his shoulder with his sword with such force that it emerged from the other side. Thereafter the remaining patricians were afraid to come and fight. He called them but none responded.

Khâlid ﷺ went after them, striking them until he reached the point of exhaustion. Al-Hârith bin Hishâm al-Makhzûmî felt sorry for him and said to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "O commander, Khâlid ﷺ has fulfilled his duty and given the sword its due. Why do you not order him to rest?" So Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ walked to him firmly resolved that he should not go any further and ordered him to rest.

Khâlid ﷺ : O commander, I seek martyrdom in every possible way. If I miss it then at least Allâh knows my intention.

He then attacked and did not stop until the job was completed. The Muslims, led by the women, joined him, returning after having fled. The battle continued between the two parties until the Romans fled, thousands of them having been slain.

The chained ones were slashed to pieces. The horses crushed them with their hooves. The battle lasted until sunset at which point the two parties separated. Rivers of their blood had flowed and the Earth was carpeted with corpses and the wounded of both parties, although Roman losses were by far heavier. So both sides returned to recoup them and tend to their wounds. The women prepared food, bound the wounds and applied medicine.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ did not ask anyone to go on night-watch duty as everyone was tired. He therefore went out himself with a group of volunteers. While patrolling he came across two horsemen who were also patrolling. Each time he said, "Lâ ilâha illallâh," they responded, "Muhammad Rasûlullâh ﷺ!"

He found them to be az-Zubayr ﷺ and his wife Asmâ and made salâm to them.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O cousin of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, why are you two out here?

Az-Zubayr ﷺ : We are guarding the Muslims because Asmâ said to me, "O cousin of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, the Muslims were busy the whole day in Jihâd and are therefore too tired to go on night-watch. Will you help me to go on night-duty?" so I accepted her request. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ thanked them and requested them to return, but they refused to and patrolled until morning.

63) Drowning of the Roman army

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ narrates from Safwân bin 'Amr bin 'Abdirahman bin Jubayr:

Abû al-Ja'îd was one of the leaders of Hims. When the Romans gathered to go to al-Yarmûk they entered Hims and then descended upon a town called az-Zurâ'ah. Abû al-Ja'id had migrated from Hims to az-Zurâ'ah because of its pleasant climate and water. When the Romans came he was celebrating his first night with his new bride. He went out of his way to entertain them. He fed them and gave them wine to drink.

After the feast they said to him, "Give us your bride."

He refused and swore at them while they insisted on getting her. After he denounced them, they went and forcibly took her and violated her for the rest of the night. Abû al-Ja'id wept and cursed them so they killed his son from a previous wife.

The mother took the child's head, wrapped it in her scarf and took it to their commander. She flung the head at him and complained, "Look what your men have done to my son. I demand my rights."

When he ignored her she said, "By God! The 'Arabs will triumph over you," and returned cursing them. In a short while the Muslims had destroyed them.

After Nestor was killed at al-Yarmûk, Abû al-Ja'îd arrived at the Muslim camp and said to Khâlid ﷺ, "This is such a massive army you are facing that even if they voluntarily gave themselves to you to be killed it would still take a long time. What will you give me if I trick them so that you triumph this very night?"

Khâlid ☙ : We will give you many rewards and exception from Jizyah for you, your household and descendants for all eternity. We will give you a document to this effect.

After obtaining his guarantees, Abû al-Ja'îd went to the Romans who did not know of his pact. He led them to the side of a huge valley filled with water and said to them, "The 'Arabs frequent this place. I will deceive them for you and destoy them. Remain here and do not move."

In that way he managed to put the an-Nâqûsah Creek between the Romans and 'Arabs, but the Romans did not realise just how deep it was. After the 'Day of Losing One Eye', Abû al-Ja'îd realised that the 'Arabs would win. He therefore went to Abû 'Ubaydah ☙ whom he found on night-patrol with a group of Muhâjirîn ☙.

Abû al-Ja'îd : Why are you just sitting here?

Muslims : What should we do?

Abû al-Ja'îd : Tomorrow night you should light many fires.

He then returned to the Romans to implement his plan. The following night the Muslims lit more than 10,000 fires. Abû al-Ja'îd arrived and they said to him, "We lit the fires as you requested. What is next?

Abû al-Ja'îd : I want 500 of your best warriors to show them my plan.

Amongst the 500 chosen were Dirâr ☙, 'Iyâd, Râfi', 'Abdullâh bin Yâsir, 'Abdullâh bin Aws, 'Abdullâh bin 'Umar, 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr, Ghânim bin 'Abdillâh and other such chiefs. He then took them on an untravelled path towards the Romans. As they neared the Romans he showed them a path which only he knew of and said, "Fight them then withdraw. I will then deal with them."

The Muslims went and shouted. They attacked and then withdrew to the path as instructed. Abû al-Ja'îd then shouted out loud, "O Romans, come and get the fleeing Muslims. They have all come here and lit their fires intending to do battle."

The Romans rushed out thinking it to be true. Some came riding bareback while others came on foot. They came chasing the Muslims with Abû al-Ja'îd guiding them. When they reached the an-Nâqûsah creek he said, "You will have to cross this path to reach them."

They all rushed in and fell like locusts. So many of them drowned that their numbers cannot even be imagined. The 'Arabs then named it an-Nâqûsah (the decreaser) because it had decreased the Romans.

The rest of the Romans did not know what had happened until morning. They saw the Muslims in their own camp, yet it seemed that they had attacked and severely decreased their numbers. They asked, "Who was screaming last night?"

Someone replied, "That man whose wife you raped and child you killed. He has now got his revenge."

64) George is killed

When Bannes found out, he became certain of his destruction and the 'Arabs' victory. He sent for Theodorus and said, "What do you think I should do? The 'Arabs have overcome us and if they but attack us once, none of us will escape. So will you go and ask them to delay the battle so that we can devise some strategy to save us?" "We should do that," replied Theodorus.

Bannes called a Lakhmî to convey this message to the Muslims, "The fortunes of war change and the world will perish. You have been treacherous towards us. Do not wrong us for wrong only leads to defeat. Delay fighting today, tomorrow a final solution can be reached."

The Lakhmî conveyed the message to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. He wanted to accept but Khâlid ﷺ stopped him, saying, "O commander, do not accept for they have no hope left."

Thereupon Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ said to Lakhmi, "Go back to your master and tell him that we will not delay the battle. We are in a hurry to speed things up."

The Lakhmî returned to inform Bannes who was furious and threw a tantrum. He said, "I was hoping the 'Arabs would accept peace. Now there remains no option but for me to fight them personally. This I swear by the cross.

He then called the Romans, Caesar's courtiers and all those who were reliable and ordered them to get their gear.

Bannes led the vanguard himself with a cross in front of him and found the Muslims already in battle-array. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had ordered them immediately after Salâtul Fajr to hastily get to their battle-stations. Today they were certain of victory over the

enemy. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ arranged the flag-bearers and stayed with Khâlid ﷺ and other famous horsemen.

At sunrise, George, one of the enemy generals challenged the Muslims, "None but the commander of the 'Arabs may duel me."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ heard and gave Khâlid ﷺ the flag, saying, "You are most entitled to the flag. If I return then I will take it back, otherwise keep it until 'Umar reaches a decision."

Khâlid ﷺ : I will fight him, not you.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : No, he seeks me so I should go. You will be my partner in reward.

He went out despite the protests of the Muslims. They went and begged him not to go but he insisted and so they let him go.

When George saw him he asked, "Are you the commander of the army?"

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : I am he. I have accepted your challenge so beware of the battlefield. I will defeat you and kill Bannes after killing you.

George : The nation of the cross will overcome you.

George then attacked. The duel was a protracted one. Khâlid ﷺ and all the Muslims stood watching and making du'â for Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ safety and victory. Eventually George fled to his right-wing while Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ came chasing him.

George spun around and struck like lightning at Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who struck back. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was faster and cut him from one shoulder to the other.

He was followed by the Muslims who proclaimed, "Allâhu Akbar!" He was amazed at George's huge bulk and did not take anything of the spoils. Khâlid ﷺ called out, "Allâh be praised for the commander. You have fulfilled your duty, so return to your flag now." Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ refused to return. When the Muslims implored him under oath he returned and took the flag from Khâlid's ﷺ hand.

65) Sergius seeks revenge

Bannes looked at George's corpse and was extremely upset since George was one of the pillars of the Roman effort. He thought of leaving but then said to himself, "What excuse can I offer to Heraclius? I will have to fight. If I am killed I will be saved from

blame and if I return safely I will be in a better position with Caesar than fleeing to him."

He then announced to his men that he intended going for personal combat. He got all his gear and ornamentations and resembled a mountain of glittering gold. He then gathered all the patricians, priests and monks and said to them, "Caesar understood this situation better than you. He wanted peace but you opposed him. Now I will have to personally fight them."

A courtier who was very religious stepped forward. He would greatly honour the priests and churches and obeyed all the precepts of the Bible. As a relative of George, he was extremely upset at his killing. He said, "I swear by the Cross! I will fight the Muslims. I will either join George or avenge him and kill his murderer. To take up the sacred cause has become obligatory upon me. I have to fulfil my duty to Christ and go to fight."

Bannes permitted this courtier, Sergius, to avenge George's death. He wore iron-plated armour. He carried his sword with him and the priest came to burn the incense of the church around him, praying for his victory. A monk of Amorium approached him and gave him his cross which he wore around his neck and said, " This cross is from the days of Christ. The monks inherit it from each other and rub it for blessings. It will help you."

Sergius took the cross and called out in 'Arabic, "Duel!" so that the Muslims thought it was a Christian 'Arab. Dirâr ﷺ went forth like a blazing fire. When he saw Sergius's huge bulk he regretted taking such gear which weighed him down and said to himself, "What use will this clothing be to me if my death comes?" and returned.

The people thought that he had fled out of fright. Someone said, "Dirâr ﷺ flees from the Christian when he has not even struck him."

Dirâr ﷺ went straight to his tent without speaking to anyone. He stripped off his clothing except for his trousers. He took his bow, sword and shield and hastened back to the battlefield only to find that Mâlik an-Nakha'î ﷺ had beat him to the patrician.

Mâlik ﷺ was such a tall man that whenever he mounted his horse his legs would reach the ground. Dirâr ﷺ watched as he called out, "Come forward, O enemy of Allâh, O worshipper of the cross, come to a man of high birth who helps the beloved Muhammad ﷺ."

Sergius was so terrified that he could not answer. Mâlik ﷺ went and attacked seeking to spear him but could not find a good target due to his all-protecting iron.

Mâlik ؓ then thrust his spear through the horse's haunch until it came out through the other side. He wanted to remove it from the kicking horse but it was embedded in the horse's ribs and could not be removed. The horse fell with Sergius still on it, chained to his saddle.

Dirâr ؓ rushed at Sergius and struck his head with his sword, splitting his head into two and then took the booty.

Mâlik ؓ : What is this, Dirâr ؓ? Since when did you become my partner in my prey?

Dirâr ؓ: I am not your partner, the spoils are mine alone.

Mâlik ؓ : But I killed his horse.

Dirâr ؓ : Sometimes he who sits eats, not he who runs.

Mâlik ؓ *(smiling)* : Take your prey. Allâh bless you in it.

Dirâr ؓ : No, you take it. I was only joking. By Allâh! I will not take a thing. You are more entitled to it.

He then stripped the spoils off Sergius and carried them on his shoulders. It was so heavy that he could barely walk and perspired profusely.

Zuhayr bin 'Âbid narrates:

I saw him walking and carrying the spoils while Mâlik was on horseback. He went until he deposited it all in Mâlik's tent. Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ then said, "May my parents be sacrificed for you! These are such people who sacrifice their lives for Allâh and desire nothing of this world."

66) Bannes comes out to fight

The killing of Sergius clipped Bannes's wing. He gathered his men and said, "Hear, O men of Caesar, convey to others what I am about to say. I have expended every effort in defending this religion, Caesar and his bounties. However, I can never hope to overcome the Lord of Heaven. He has helped the 'Arabs against us and given them our lands. I cannot show my face again to Caesar except if I now fight in the place of cutting and thrusting. I have decided to give one of you the cross while I go to fight the Muslims. If I am killed then I am free of shame and Caesar's blame. If I am blessed with victory then Caesar will know that I was not deficient in his defence."

Romans : O king, do not go until we do. If we are killed then you can do as you please.

Bannes then swore by the Four Churches that none would fight before him so they stopped arguing. He called his son and gave him the cross, saying, "Stay in my place." He then put on his gear which was brought to him.

(Four Churches probably refers to the ancient four centres of Christianity in the East i.e. Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch and Constantinople — translator's note).

Bannes's gear was valued at 60,000 dinar for it was completely encrusted in jewels. A monk appeared before him and said, "O king, I do not see dueling as an option for you. I do not like it."

Bannes : Why is that?

Monk : I saw a dream...rather return and send someone else.

Bannes : I will not. I prefer fighting to shame.

So they burnt incense for him and bade him farewell. He departed like a flashing mountain of gold. He paused between the two parties, challenging the Muslims and threatening them by calling out his name.

The first to recognise him was Khâlid ﷺ who said, "That is Bannes. The commander of the enemy has come out. By Allâh! Things are not going well for them." While Bannes was still threatening them, a boy of the Aws tribe went to him and said, "By Allâh! I am longing for Jannah."

Bannes attacked him with a golden spear that he kept under his thigh and martyred him. Allâh then sped his soul to Jannah.

Abû Hurayrah ﷺ narrates:

I saw the boy after he fell. He was pointing with his fingers to the sky, not at all concerned at what had befallen him. I perceived that that was because of the women of Jannah he was seeing.

Bannes pranced about in his place, becoming more bold and issuing challenges. The Muslims came rushing to him, all calling out, "O Allâh, let his death be at my hand." The first to reach him was Mâlik an-Nakha'î al-Ashtar who said, "O you uncircumcised Christian, do not be proud of killing our man because he was desirous

of meeting his Rabb. Every single one of us desires Paradise. If you wish to be our neighbour in Paradise then declare your embracing of Islâm. Otherwise you will have to pay Jizyah, or failing that also, you will certainly be destroyed."

Bannes : You are my enemy, Khâlid bin al-Walîd?

Mâlik ﷺ : No, I am Mâlik an-Nakha'î, a Sahâbî of Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

Bannes : War is the only option.

Bannes who was a great warrior then attacked Mâlik ﷺ with his spear. He hit him right through his helmet which pressed against his forehead, shattering his eye-sockets. Hence he was nicknamed, 'al-Ashtar', the shattered one.

Mâlik ﷺ wanted to flee but then stood firm and sought Allâh's help. Blood was flowing from his forehead and Allâh's enemy thought that he was about to die and waited for him to fall off his horse. Suddenly Mâlik ﷺ attacked him and the Muslims called out, "O Mâlik, seek Allâh's help. He will help you against your opponent."

Mâlik ﷺ narrates:

I implored Allâh's help, conveyed salutations upon Rasûlullâh ﷺ and struck him such a heavy blow wherein there was no weakness. This made me realise that the time of death is fixed as a fortress is fixed. Bannes felt the blow and fled to his camp.

67) The great victory

When Bannes fled Khâlid ﷺ called out, "O people of victory and war, attack them while they are confused."

He and his men attacked. Every commander then charged with his men, all reciting, "Lâ ilâha illallâh wallâhu Akbar!"

The Romans displayed great patience but lost nerve at sunset. They fled, followed by the Muslims who captured or killed as they pleased. About 100,000 Romans were killed, a similar amount were captured and a similar amount drowned in an-Nâqûsah Creek. Innumerable numbers of them fled to the mountains and valleys. The Muslims pursued them, killing and capturing them until night set in. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ then called out, "Leave them until morning."

The Muslims returned with booty and tents, gold or silver utensils, rugs, pillows and velvet-like carpets. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ appointed some men to gather the booty. The

Muslims spent the night rejoicing until morning. They then found no trace of the Romans, most of them having drowned in the creek.

'Âmir bin Yâsir narrates from Nawfal bin 'Adî who narrates from Jâbir bin Nasr who narrates from Hâmid bin Majîd:

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ tried to have the Romans counted but the sheer magnitude overwhelmed him. He then ordered reeds to be cut from the valley and placed on each corpse (*numbered? – translator's note*) and found the dead to be 105,000 and the prisoners 40,000. This was excluding those drowned in the creek. 4,000 Muslims were martyred.

He also found several heads in the Yarmûk River and it could not be determined whether they were Roman or 'Arab. He then prayed Salâtul Janâzah over the martyrs.

The Muslims went to the mountains and valleys to capture the fugitives. They met a shepherd and asked him, "Did any Romans pass through here?"

"Yes," he replied, "A patrician passed by me with about 40,000 men."

That was none other than Bannes. Khâlid ﷺ took his elite squad and went in pursuit of them. He caught up with them in Damascus. When he saw them he called out, "Allâhu Akbar!"

The Muslims called out, "Allâhu Akbar!" and attacked, killing a mass of them.

Bannes got off his horse in order to disguise himself to be safe. However, a Muslim came and killed him. It was either an-Nu'mân bin Jahlah al-Azdî or 'Âsim bin Khawwâl al-Yarbû'î.

The people of Damascus came out to meet Khâlid ﷺ and said to him, "We remain upon the treaty which we agreed upon."

Khâlid ﷺ : Yes, so you do.

He then went in pursuit of the Romans, killing them wherever he found them until he reached the Pass of the Eagle where he remained for a day. He then advanced towards Hims. Upon being informed of this, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and his men went to meet up with him. The other commanders were spread out in all directions hunting down the fugitives.

68) Glad-tidings

The Muslims eventually gathered and returned to Damascus. There Abû'Ubaydah ؓ gathered the booty and extracted the state's one-fifth share. He wrote the following letter to 'Umar ؓ to inform him of the victory:

In the name of Allâh the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful and may His salutations be on His Chosen Prophet, His selected Messenger.

From : Abû 'Ubaydah 'Amir bin al-Jarrâh.

I praise Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity. I thank Him for His bounties and that He specially chose us for the blessings of the Prophet of mercy and Intercessor of the Ummah.

Know, O Commander of the Believers, that I came to al-Yarmûk and Bannes, leader of the Roman army camped close to us. The Muslims had never seen a bigger army. Allâh reduced them and helped us against them through His special favour. We killed about 105,000 of them and captured 40,000. Allâh granted 4,000 Muslims the gift of martyrdom. I also found severed heads whom I did not recognise but I still prayed Salâtul Janâzah for them and buried them. 'Âsim bin Khawwâl killed Bannes at Damascus.

Before the final encounter a man from amongst them, Abû al-Ja'îd from Hims, tricked them and flung many Romans into the Nâqûsah Creek, causing them all to drown. None can estimate the amount except Allâh.

As for the fugitives killed in the mountains and valleys I counted them to be more than 1,000. We have possession of their wealth, horses, forts and lands.

We have written this letter after the victory and after having entered Damascus. Salâm, Allâh's mercy and His blessings be upon you and all the Muslims.

He folded and sealed the letter and called Huthayfah bin al-Yamân ﷺ. He handed him the letter and told ten Muhâjirîn and Ansâr to join him. He said to them, "Take this letter of victory and glad-tidings to the Commander of the Believers. Your reward is Allâh's responsibility." The eleven left in the same hour and travelled day and night until they reached al-Madînah.

'Abdullâh bin 'Awf al-Mâlikî narrates from his father:

On the night Allâh defeated the Romans at al-Yarmûk, 'Umar ﷺ saw Rasûlullâh ﷺ in a dream. He was sitting in his tomb with Abû Bakr ﷺ. 'Umar ﷺ made salâm and said, "O Rasûlullâh ﷺ, verily my heart is preoccupied with worry for the Muslims and what Allâh will do to them. I have heard that the Romans number 1,060,000.

Rasûlullâh ﷺ : Glad-tidings 'Umar, Allâh has granted the Muslims victory and defeated their enemy and killed so many.

تِلْكَ ٱلدَّارُ ٱلْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ
لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا

That is the Abode of the Hereafter which we made for those who neither desire highness on Earth nor corruption. [28:83]

In the morning 'Umar ﷺ led the Muslims in Salâtul Fajr and then informed them of his dream. They rejoiced because they knew that the Devil could not take the form of Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

When the letter arrived it was found to correspond exactly to what had been revealed in the dream, including the date. 'Umar ﷺ fell down prostrate out of thanks and the Muslims raised cries of, "Lâ ilâha illallâh!" and "Allâhu Akbar!" and conveyed salutations on Rasûlullâh ﷺ. He then asked, "O Huthayfah, did Abû 'Ubaydah divide the booty?"

"O Commander of the Believers," he replied, "He is awaiting your instructions."

'Umar ﷺ called for an ink-pot and paper and wrote:

> *In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*
>
> *From : Allâh's slave, 'Umar bin al-Khattâb.*
>
> *To : His governor over Syria.*
>
> *Salâm 'Alayka*
>
> *I praise Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity and I convey salutations upon His Prophet Muhammad.*
>
> *I am delighted at the victory Allâh granted to the Muslims and the defeat of Rome. When my letter reaches you divide the booty amongst the Muslims but give preference to the early Muslims. Give each one his due right. Protect the Muslims and thank them for their actions and patience. Stay where you are until further instructions.*
>
> *Peace and Allâh's mercy and blessings be upon you and all the Muslims.*

He folded the letter and gave it to Huthayfah ﷺ.

69) Disputes over the booty

Huthayfah ﷺ reached Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ at Damascus. He made salâm to him and all the Muslims and gave him the letter. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ divided the booty. Each horseman got 24,000 Mithqal of gold (105 kg) and the footmen got 8,000 (35 kg). The same amount was given in silver. He gave the owner of an 'Arab horse two shares and of a Turkish horse one. The owners of Turkish horses complained, "Join us with the 'Arab horses."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ replied, "I divided the booty in the same manner as Rasûlullâh ﷺ divided amongst the Sahâbah."

They did not accept his word and so he wrote to 'Umar ﷺ. 'Umar ﷺ replied,

"You have implemented the Sunnah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. Do not change your decision. Give the horseman of an 'Arab horse two shares and the low-grade horse one share. Rasûlullâh ﷺ distinguished between them at Khaybar in that manner."

When the letter reached Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ he read it out to the Muslims, and said, "I had not intended to degrade anyone amongst them, but was simply following the Sunnah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ."

After the division of booty, Khâlid ؓ said, "A man who owns a low-grade horse has sought my intercession to be granted a double share like the 'Arab horses."

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ refused and said, "By Allâh! I would rather sink in sand than do that."

'Uthmân narrates from Ibn az-Zubayr:

I saw my father, az-Zubayr bin al-Awwâm ؓ, in the Battle of al-Yarmûk with two horses which he took turns in riding to battle. Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ gave him three shares, a share for himself and two for the horse. So az-Zubayr ؓ said, "Will you not treat me as Rasûlullâh ﷺ treated me at Khaybar? He gave me five shares, one for me and four for my two horses."

Al-Miqdâd bin 'Amr ؓ: We were both at Badr and both had two horses each so Rasûlullâh ﷺ gave two shares for two horses in both cases.*(Al-Miqdâd al-Kindî ؓ is called both Ibn al-Aswad and Ibn 'Amr - translator's note).*

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : O Miqdâd, you speak the truth. I am following the deed of Rasûlullâh ﷺ in what I gave az-Zubayr.

Jâbir bin 'Abdillâh al-Ansârî ؓ then came and testified that Rasûlullâh ﷺ had given az-Zubayr ؓ five shares at Khaybar. Thereupon horsemen came who owned four or five 'Arab horses and said, "Grant us the extra shares like az-Zubayr."

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ then wrote to 'Umar ؓ who replied,

"Az-Zubayr ؓ speaks the truth. Rasûlullâh ﷺ gave him five shares especially at Khaybar. Do not give anyone besides him these extra shares."

'Urwa narrates from Abû az-Zubayr:

Az-Zubayr ؓ had received a slave-boy from the booty of 'Ammân who ran away from him. Before the booty of al-Yarmûk was distributed he recognised him amongst the captives and took him. The trustee of the booty proclaimed, "I will not leave him to you."

While they argued, Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ arrived and asked, "What is wrong with you two?"

Az-Zubayr ؓ : O commander, this is my slave who I got from the booty of 'Ammân. He ran away from me and now I have found him so I am most entitled to him.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : The cousin of Rasûlullâh ﷺ speaks the truth. I myself gave him to him from the booty of 'Ammân.

He then gave the slave to az-Zubayr ؓ who took him.

Zayd al-Murâdî narrates:

A slave-girl of ours ran away to the enemy and we caught her at al-Yarmûk. We claimed her from Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ who wrote to 'Umar ؓ. He replied,

"If she was caught from enemy lands, they may keep her, if not she is part of the general booty."

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ ordered her to be with the general booty which angered the people. He said to them, "By Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity! This is the letter of 'Umar bin al-Khattâb. He ruled as I had now ordered for you."

They accepted this and handed her over.

Luayy bin 'Abd Rabbihi narrates from Sâlim the freed-slave of Huthayfah bin al-Yamân who narrates from al-Qâsit bin Salamah bin 'Adî bin 'Asim who narrates from the narrators of the conquest of Syria:

When Allâh defeated the Romans at al-Yarmûk at the hands of the Sahâbah ؓ of Rasûlullâh ﷺ the news reached Heraclius of the defeat and killing of Bannes and George. He then said, "I knew it would reach this point" and then awaited the Muslims' next move.

Part 4

Baytul Muqaddas

Contents

Part 4

Baytul Muqaddas

1) March on Baytul Muqaddas (Jerusalem)

After the Muslim armies had been in Damascus for a month, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ summoned all the generals and said, "Advise me as to what I should do and where I should turn my attention to."

It was decided between either Caesarea or Baytul Muqaddas.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : So which of the two should it be?

Generals : You are the trusted one. Wherever you go we will follow.

Mu'âth bin Jabal ﷺ : Write to 'Umar bin al-Khattâb, the Commander of the Believers. Go wherever he tells you to and seek Allâh's help.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O Mu'âth, your view is sound.

So he wrote to him to inform him that he had resolved upon going either to Caesarea or Baytul Muqaddas and asked which of the two he should invade. 'Umar ﷺ read the letter out to the Muslims and asked for their views.

'Ali ﷺ : O Commander of the Believers, order your man to go to Baytul Muqaddas to besiege her and fight her people. This is the best option. Thereafter, if Allah Most High wills, He will conquer Caesarea. This is what Rasûlullâh ﷺ told me.

'Umar ﷺ : You have spoken the truth, Abû al-Hasan.

He then wrote the following letter:

> *In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*
>
> *From : Allâh's slave, 'Umar bin al-Khattâb*
>
> *To : His governor over Syria, Abû 'Ubaydah*

I praise Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity and convey salutations upon His Prophet.

I have received your letter which asks as to which direction you should advance in. The cousin of Rasûlullâh ﷺ recommends that you march on Baytul Muqaddas for Allâh, Most Pure and High will conquer her through you.

Was-Salâm 'alayka.

He folded the letter and handed it for delivery to 'Arfajah.

The messenger met Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ at al-Jâbiyah where he gave him the letter. Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ read it out to the Muslims who rejoiced at going to Baytul Muqaddas. He called Khâlid ؓ, gave him a flag and sent him with 5,000 elite cavalry to Baytul Muqaddas. He then ordered Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ؓ to meet Khâlid ؓ at Baytul Muqaddas with another 5,000. He said, "O Ibn Abî Sufyân, I only know you to be a well-wisher. When you reach Ayla (*Roman name for Baytul Muqaddas - translator's note*) raise your voices with, "Lâ ilâha illallâh," and "Allâhu Akbar". Ask Allâh, through the intercession of His Prophet ﷺ as well as the other prophets and pious people who dwelt in Baytul Muqaddas, to make her conquest easy for the Muslims."

Yazîd ؓ took the flag and went.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ then summoned Shura<u>h</u>bîl bin <u>H</u>asanah ؓ and gave him 5,000 Yamanî horsemen, saying, "Take these men to Baytul Muqaddas but when you reach there do not mix your troops with the other armies who arrived there before you."

Then he called al-Mirqâl bin Hâshim bin 'Utbah bin Abî Waqqâs. He sent him behind Shura<u>h</u>bîl ؓ with 5,000 horsemen of mixed tribes and said, "Camp at the fort of Baytul Muqaddas and remain separated from the other Muslim armies."

The fifth flag was for al-Musayyib bin Najîyah with 5,000 cavalry from Nakha' and other tribes. The sixth flag was for Qays bin Hubayrah with 5,000 cavalry and the seventh for 'Urwah bin Muhalhil bin Zayd al-Khayl with 5,000 cavalry.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ thus sent a total of 35,000 men to Baytul Muqaddas. Each day a different one of the seven generals departed for the city. This was to terrify Allâh's enemies.

The first to arrive was Khâlid ﷺ. He and his men raised cries of "Allâhu Akbar! Allâhu Akbar!" to such an extent that the people became alarmed and their hearts shook. They climbed up the city walls and upon seeing his small force, thought that it was the entire army and considered it quite petty. Khâlid ﷺ camped at the Jericho Gate.

On the second day, Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ arrived; Shurahbîl bin Hasanah ﷺ on the third; al-Mirqâl on the fourth; al-Musayyib bin Najîyah on the fifth; Qays bin Hubayrah on the sixth and 'Urwah bin Muhalhil, who camped near the ar-Ramlah roads, arrived on the seventh day.

'Abdullah bin 'Âmir bin Rabî'ah al-Ghatfânî narrates:

Every Muslim who arrived at Baytul Muqaddas proclaimed, "Allâhu Akbar!" and performed Salâh for as long as Allâh desired him to. He would then beseech Allâh for victory against the enemies.

In other reports Yazîd ﷺ was sent first while Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, Khâlid ﷺ, the remainder of the army, the women, the children, the animals and all the booty Allâh had granted to the Muslims remained at their place.

2) The siege of Baytul Muqaddas

For three days not so much as a duel took place. The enemy neither sent an envoy nor spoke to the Muslims in any way. Instead, they heavily fortified their walls with catapults, swords, shields and assorted weaponry.

Al-Musayyib bin Najîyah al-Fazârî narrates:

We had not come to any city in all of Syria which was more highly decorated and equipped than Baytul Muqaddas. The people of every place we came to became feeble, and despair and fear entered their hearts – not so Baytul Muqaddas. We besieged them for three days but not a single one of them came to speak to us. All they did was show off their tight security and defences.

On the fourth day a bedouin said to Shurahbîl ﷺ, "O commander, it is as if these people are deaf and cannot hear us or dumb and cannot speak to us or blind and cannot see us. Lead us in an attack against them."

After Salâtul Fajr on the fifth day, Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ؓ went to speak to them. He unsheathed his sword and took a translator with him. He reached close enough to the city wall for them to hear him, but they maintained their silence.

Yazîd ؓ : Say to them that the commander of the 'Arabs says – Will you not accept an invitation to Islâm, to the Truth, to the declaration of sincerity i.e. "There is no deity but Allâh and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh." Our Rabb will then forgive all your past sins and your blood will be safe. If you refuse then surrender as those before you surrendered. Bear in mind that they were stronger and greater in number than you. If you refuse both these options then ruin will befall you and you can reserve your place in Hell.

Translator : O people, who is your spokesman?

Priest (wearing clothing of hair) : I am. What do you want?

Translator : The general calls you to this... so you now have three options; either Islâm or Jizyah or the sword.

The priest conveyed the message to those behind him. They made declarations of their disbelief and said, "We will never leave the religion of honour. To be killed is a lighter matter for us." The translator translated for Yazîd ؓ who went to tell the other generals and said, "Why are you still waiting to attack them?"

Generals : Abû 'Ubaydah has not ordered us to attack them, only to besiege them. We should write to him and if he permits, we will attack.

Yazîd ؓ therefore wrote to him, informing him of their reply and requesting further instructions. Abû 'Ubaydah replied that they should attack and that he would personally arrive soon. Upon receiving the letter, the Muslims spent the night rejoicing and awaiting the arrival of morning. They all anticipated fighting the enemy and every general hoped that the city's conquest would be at his hands so that he could be the first to perform salâh therein and observe all the sacred relics of the ancient prophets.

At dawn, Yazîd ؓ led his men in Salâtul Fajr and recited:

يَٰقَوْمِ ٱدْخُلُوا۟ ٱلْأَرْضَ ٱلْمُقَدَّسَةَ ٱلَّتِى كَتَبَ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَرْتَدُّوا۟

O my people enter the sacred land (Baytul Muqadda and surrounds) which Allâh has decreed for you and do not turn back. [5:23]

It is said that Allâh inspired each general to recite that verse as if they had all agreed to it. After Salâh it was called out, "To arms! To arms! O cavalry of Allâh, mount your horses."

The first to advance was the Himyar and the other Yamanîs. The Muslims advanced like a striking black snake.

The enemy watched, all spread out in battle-array. They began opening fire, showering the Muslims with arrows like a swarm of locusts. The Muslims protected themselves with their shields. The battle was fierce and lasted from morning until sunset. The enemy showed no fear and gave the Muslims no hope of conquering their city.

At sunset the Muslims returned to their camp and performed the salâh which Allâh had decreed upon them. They saw to themselves and ate supper. Thereafter they lit numerous fires because they had plenty of firewood with them. Some engaged in Salâh, others recited the Qurân, others wept before Allâh while the fatigued ones slept.

The next morning the Muslims again advanced, taking the name of Allâh profusely, praising Him and sending salutations upon Rasûlullâh ﷺ. The archers went ahead and began firing, taking the name of Allâh with each arrow shot and loudly making du'â.

The Muslims fought the people of Baytul Muqaddas for ten days, but the enemy only displayed happiness and showed not the least trace of fear. On the eleventh day, Abû 'Ubaydah's ؓ slave, Sâlim, was seen coming, carrying his master's flag. Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ then arrived, surrounded by horsemen. On his right was Khâlid ؓ and on his left 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr ؓ. The Muslims gave a huge shout of "Lâ ilâha illallâh wallâhu Akbar!"which spread amongst the tribes.

3) The Patriarch of Baytul Muqaddas

The Christians finally felt fear. Their leaders, elders and patricians went to the great Cathedral of al-Qumâmah or al-'Imâmah. They humbly submitted themselves before the patriarch whom they greatly revered and said, "O father, their chief commander

has brought the rest of the Muslims and is causing this great noise." When the bishop heard this his face and colour changed and he said, "This is it. This is it."

Christians : What is it, O our patriarch and great father?

Patriarch : By the Gospel! If their commander has come then your end is at hand.

Christians : How is that?

Patriarch : We have learnt from knowledge inherited from the ancients that a reddish-brown man named 'Umar who is a companion of their prophet called Muhammad will conquer the length and breadth of the land. If he has come then there is no way of fighting him and you will have no power against him. I must examine his appearance. If it is indeed him then I will surrender and accept whatever he demands. If it someone else then we shall never surrender for none but 'Umar can conquer our city.

The patriarch got up surrounded by priests, monks and acolytes who raised the cross above his head and opened the Bible before him. The patricians then also gathered around him. He climbed the city wall at the side where Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had arrived. He saw the Muslims making salâm and honouring their commander. They immediately returned to fighting like hunting lions.

A man who had walked in front of the patriarch then called out, "O Muslims, stop fighting so that we may ask you some questions." When the Muslims stopped fighting, a Roman called out in 'Arabic, "We know the description of the man who will conquer our city and all the land. If he is your commander we shall surrender otherwise if it is not him we shall never surrender."

A group of Muslims went to inform Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. When he went to them, the patriarch said, "This is not him. Rejoice and defend your city, religion and women."

The Christians raised their voices with their words of disbelief and proceeded to attack. A vicious fight ensued. The patriarch returned to his cathedral without saying a single word to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, but ordered his people to carry on fighting.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ also returned to his men.

Khâlid ﷺ : What did they want from you?

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : I really do not know. I went out to them as you saw when one of their devils appeared. This devil who misleads them examined me and shouted something and left without saying a single word to me.

Khâlid ﷺ : There must be some kind of reason for all this which we will find out.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : For now, destroy them with war.

The Muslims then attacked.

4) The Battle

The Muslims attacked Baytul Muqaddas during a harsh winter and the inhabitants thought that their enemies would not be able to overcome them at that time.

The Yamanî archers took aim and opened fire with arrows made of mountain trees which had a heavy impact. The Romans had no protection due to their indifference and before they knew it the arrows came thudding into their chests right through to their backs.

Muhalhil or 'Awf bin Muhâyil narrates:

Allah be praised at the 'Arabs of Yaman. I saw them firing at the Romans who came tumbling down their wall one after the other like a flock of sheep. When they saw the effect of the arrows they covered the wall with shields, leather and anything else strong enough to deflect the arrows.

The Romans saw Dirâr ﷺ coming towards the Great Gate. At the top of the gate there was a great patrician wearing a jewelled cross on his head and exhorting the people to battle. He was surrounded by boys holding stringed bows and spears.

'Awf bin Muhalhil narrates:

I saw Dirâr ﷺ sneaking towards the tower where the patrician was. When he came near he fired an arrow. I saw how high the wall and tower were and said to myself, "What can that arrow do when that patrician is wearing shiny upper-body armour and the wall is so high?"

But I swear by Allâh! The arrow penetrated his mouth and he fell to the bottom of the tower. The people heard a great scream with a frightening echo and realised that he had been killed.

Four months had passed since Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ arrival and not a day had gone without intense fighting. The Muslims persevered against the cold, snow and rain.

When the Romans began to feel the pinch of the siege, they went to the cathedral, prostrated before the patriarch and said, "O Father, the siege of these 'Arabs is hurting us and we cannot even hope for help from Caesar because he is obviously too busy recovering after the defeat of his army. The 'Arabs like to fight more than we do. We have not spoken a single word to them since they arrived because we look down upon them, but now things are so bad we ask you to go to them and see what they want. If their terms are acceptable then we will comply, but if they are too difficult then we will open the gates and fight them until either we are all killed or we defeat them."

The patriarch agreed. He put on his robes, climbed the wall with them carrying a cross in front of him. The priests and monks surrounded him, carrying open Bibles and incense. When they reached the spot facing Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ someone shouted in pure 'Arabic, "O 'Arabs, the pillar of the Christian Faith and master of its Law has come to speak to you. Let your commander come here."

5) Negotiations

When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was informed, he said, "By Allâh! I will answer him where he calls me." He went with a group of officers, Sahâbah ﷺ and a translator. Upon reaching them they said to the translator, " What do you want in our sacred city? God becomes angry and destroy whoever targets it."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Tell them that yes, she is indeed a noble city. From her our Prophet ﷺ was taken to the Heavens and approached his Rabb the distance of two bows or even closer. She is the origin of the Prophets and their graves are in her. We are more entitled to her than you and will stay here until Allâh grants her to us just as He granted the other cities to us.

Patriarch : So what exactly do want from us?

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : One of three options - The first is that you say, "There is no deity but Allâh alone Who has no partner and that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger." If you accept these words then our rights and duties will be the same.

Patriarch : Those are very great words. We already recite them except that we do not accept Prophet Muhammad to be a Messenger.

Abû 'Ubaydah : O enemy of Allâh, you lie! You people have never taken Allâh to be One. Allâh has informed us in His Book that you say, "Christ is the son of God" but there is no deity except Allâh. He is Pure and High, incomparably high above what the oppressors attribute to Him.

Patriarch : Then this option we cannot accept. What is the second option?

Abû 'Ubaydah : You will surrender your city and pay us the Jizyah in a state of humility just as the other cities of Syria are paying.

Patriarch : That is even worse than the first option because we do not lower ourselves to anyone.

Abû 'Ubaydah : Then we will fight you until Allâh grants us victory over you. We will enslave your women and children and kill all the men who oppose the declaration of Allâh's Unity and cling to their declaration of disbelief.

Patriarch : We shall not surrender our city even if it means death. Why should we surrender when we have ample provisions to withstand your siege, excellent equipment and powerful soldiers? We are not like those cities which voluntarily paid Jizyah. They are people upon whom Christ is angry, hence He placed them under your rule. However, we live in a city in which if anyone prays to Christ, He answers him.

Abû 'Ubaydah : You lie again, O enemy of Allâh.

مَّا ٱلْمَسِيحُ ٱبْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن
قَبْلِهِ ٱلرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُۥ صِدِّيقَةٌ ۖ كَانَا يَأْكُلَانِ ٱلطَّعَامَ

Christ, son of Mary, was nothing but a Messenger. Many Messengers passed before him and his mother was a truthful, virtuous lady. Both of them ate food (which Allâh does not do).
[5:75]

Patriarch : I swear by Christ! Even if you besiege us for twenty years you will never be able to conquer us. We will only be conquered by a certain man who is described in our Scriptures and knowledge. This city will be conquered by a companion of

Muhammad called 'Umar. He will be known as al-Fârûq (the one who distinguishes between Truth and Falsehood.) He is a stern faced man who is not concerned about the rebuke of people when it comes to obeying Allâh. This is not your description.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ (laughing) : By the Rabb of the Ka'bah! We have conquered the city. Will you recognise this man if you see him?

Patriarch : Why should I not when I have his exact description and age?

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : By Allâh! He is our Khalîfah and Sahâbî of our Prophet ﷺ.

Patriarch : If he is as you say then, seeing that you know us to be truthful, you should stop the bloodshed and send for your man to come here. If we see that it is in fact him, we will open our city for him without any disturbance and pay the Jizyah.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : I will send for him. In the interim, are you still going to fight us or can we be safe and desist from you?

Patriarch : O 'Arabs, do you never leave violence? We have given you such information in complete honesty in order to save lives but you still mention battle.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Yes. In fact we do love battle more than we love life for through it we hope for our Rabb's forgiveness.

He then announced a ceasefire and both left.

6) Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ writes to 'Umar ﷺ

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ gathered the generals and Muslims and told them what the Patriarch had said. They raised their voices proclaiming, "Lâ ilâha illallâh Allâhu Akbar!" and said, "O commander, do it! Write to the Commander of the Believers. Perhaps he will come and conquer this city for us."

Shurahbîl ﷺ : Be patient. All we have to do is to say that the Khalîfah is already amongst us. We will show them Khâlid ﷺ and then they will open the gates and save us a lot of difficulty.

Khâlid ﷺ resembled 'Umar ﷺ the most.

In the morning the translator announced to the Christians, "The Khalîfah has come."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ gave Khâlid ﷺ instructions and so they all mounted and went to the enemy, saying, "The man whom you seek has come."

They informed the patriarch who came and stood on the city wall and said, "Tell him to come forward so that we can see him."

When Khâlid ﷺ came forward he said, "By Christ! This looks like it is him but some signs are missing. I implore you in the name of your religion, tell me the truth – who are you really?

Khâlid ﷺ : I am one of his companions.

Patriarch : You 'Arab boys, this is treachery! By Christ! Until we do not see the described man we will neither open the gates nor will any of us speak to you even if you besiege us for twenty years.

He left without saying anything further, so the Muslims said, "Write to the Commander of the Believers. Perhaps he will come and grace this place."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ then wrote :

> *In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*
>
> *To : Allâh's slave, the Commander of the Believers, 'Umar bin al-Khattâb*
>
> *From : His governor, Abû 'Ubaydah 'Âmir bin al-Jarrâh*
>
> *As-Salamu 'alayka*
>
> *I praise Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity and convey salutations upon His Prophet Muhammad.*
>
> *Know, O Commander of the Believers, that we arrived at Baytul Muqaddas and have been fighting now for four months. Every day we attack each other. The Muslims greatly suffer because of the snow, cold and rain but they are patient for the sake of Allâh, their Rabb.*
>
> *A day prior to me writing this letter, their patriarch whom they greatly honour said that they find in their scriptures that none shall conquer the city except for a Sahâbî of our Prophet* ﷺ

> *called 'Umar whose full description they have in their scriptures. They have requested the cessation of bloodshed and that you personally come to us. We hope that Allâh will conquer this city through you.*

He folded and sealed the letter and said, "O Muslims, who will deliver this letter? His reward is from Allâh."

Maysarah bin Masrûq hastily accepted and said, "I am the messenger. If Allâh Most High wills I will return with 'Umar bin al-Khattâb ."

Abû 'Ubaydah : Then take the letter.

7) 'Alî's recommendation

Maysarah took the letter, mounted his high-humped she-camel and continuously travelled until he reached al-Madînah at night.

Maysarah narrates:

By Allâh! I did not stop by anyone. I went straight to the masjid where I beseated and tied my she-camel. I entered the masjid and made salâm at the graves of Rasûlullâh and Abû Bakr and then slept in the masjid for I had not slept many nights. Nothing woke me except the athân of 'Umar who called it out in the dark. Thereafter he entered the masjid calling out, "Salâh! May Allâh have mercy on you."

I stood up, performed wudû and prayed Salâtul Fajr behind him.

When he left the mihrâb (prayer-niche in front of the masjid), I stood and made salâm to him. He shook my hands and was delighted to see me.

'Umar : Maysarah, by the Rabb of the Ka'bah it is you! What news do you have?

Maysarah : Goodness and safety, O Commander of the Believers.

I then gave him the letter. He read it out to the Muslims who rejoiced.

'Umar : What is your view as to what Abû 'Ubaydah has written to me? May Allâh have mercy upon you.

'Uthmân bin 'Affân : O Commander of the Believers, Allâh has disgraced Rome and expelled her from Syria. He has granted the Muslims victory over her. The

Muslims have now besieged Baytul Muqaddas and made life difficult for the inhabitants. Each day their disgrace, weakness and fear increases. If you stay where you are they will see that you regard them lightly and not worth the effort to fight personally. In a short while they will themselves come in humiliation and render Jizyah.

'Umar ﷺ : May Allâh reward you well! Does anyone hold a different view?

'Alî ﷺ : Yes, my view is different. I will explain if I may. May Allâh have mercy upon you.

'Umar ﷺ : What is it, O Abû al-Hasan?

'Alî ﷺ : They have asked for you and that very request is in itself a victory for the Muslims. The Muslims are suffering much because of the cold, the fighting and lengthy camping. I feel that if you go to them Allâh may conquer the city at your hands. Furthermore you will be well rewarded for your journey - in fact for the hunger and thirst that you experience and for every crossing of valleys and climbing of mountains until you reach them. Thereafter there will be peace, security and victory for the Muslims. I fear that if they lose hope in your coming and in peace they will fortify themselves and receive help from their despot. Once reinforcements enter the city they will not change their minds. The correct thing for you to do, if Allâh wills, is to go.

'Umar ﷺ *(happy)*: 'Uthmân has properly examined the tricks of the enemy while 'Alî has looked towards the welfare of the Muslims - may Allâh reward them both. I have decided upon 'Alî's view whom I know to be a good and blessed advisor.

He then ordered the people to prepare for the journey. Upon completing this they waited outside al-Madînah as ordered. 'Umar ﷺ then went to the Masjid where he performed four rak'ât. Thereafter he made salâm to Rasûlullâh ﷺ and Abû Bakr ﷺ and left al-Madînah having appointed 'Ali ﷺ as his deputy. The people came to escort him and bid him farewell.

8) 'Umar ﷺ sets out for Baytul Muqaddas

'Umar ﷺ rode his red camel with a sack of dates and a sack of Sawîq cereal. He had in front of him a leather bag of water and behind him a bowl. He was accompanied by S͟ah͟âbah ﷺ who had participated in al-Yarmûk and had returned to al-Madînah. These included az-Zubayr ﷺ and 'Ubâdah bin as͟ -S͟âmit ﷺ.

Wherever he camped for the night he would not leave until he had prayed Salâtul Fajr at that site. He would then turn to the Muslims and say, "All praise be to Allâh who honoured us with Islam and ennobled us with faith; Who singled us out for the blessings of His Prophet, salutations and peace be upon him; Who guided us after misguidance; Who after disunity united us upon the Word of piety and united our hearts; Who helped us against our enemy; Who entrenched us in His cities; Who made us brethren who love each other. So, O slaves of Allâh, praise Him for these all-encompassing and clear bounties and favours, for Allâh increases for the enthusiastic who seek more from what is with Him. He completes His favours to the grateful ones."

He would then take his bowl, fill it with cereal, sprinkle it with dates and say, after presenting it to the Muslims, "Eat and enjoy."

He would then eat with the Muslims. They would then depart and this remained the routine throughout the journey.

'Amr bin Mâlik al-'Absî narrates:

I accompanied 'Umar ﷺ to Syria. We passed by a spring, Thât al-Manâr, which belonged to the Juthâm. A caravan of theirs was also camped there. 'Umar ﷺ decided to camp there. At that moment, while he was surrounded by the Sahâbah ﷺ of Rasûlullâh ﷺ a group of the Juthâm came and said, "O Commander of the Believers, we have amongst us a man who is married to two sisters."

'Umar ﷺ became enraged and said, "Bring him to me." When he was brought 'Umar ﷺ asked, "Who are these two women?"

Juthâmî : My two wives.

'Umar ﷺ : Are they related to each other?

Juthâmî : Yes, they are sisters.

'Umar ﷺ : What is your religion? Are you not a Muslim?

Juthâmî : I certainly am.

'Umar ﷺ : Do you not know that that is forbidden upon you?

Allâh says in His Book:

وَأَن تَجْمَعُواْ بَيْنَ ٱلْأُخْتَيْنِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ

(It is forbidden unto you) to marry two sisters at the same time except for that which has passed. [4:23]

Ju<u>th</u>âmî : I did not know that they are forbidden upon me.

'Umar ﷺ (enraged): By Allâh, you lie! It is forbidden upon you. If you do not leave one of them I will cut your neck.

Ju<u>th</u>âmî : You rule against me?

'Umar ﷺ : Yes. By Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity.

Ju<u>th</u>âmî : This religion has brought us no good. I had no need to enter it.

'Umar ﷺ: Come closer....

As he came, 'Umar ﷺ whipped him twice on the head and said, "You take Islâm to be bad luck, you enemy of Allâh and enemy of your own self. This is the Dîn which Allâh is pleased with for His angels, His Messenger and the best of His creation. Leave one of them or I will whip you for innovating.

Ju<u>th</u>âmî : How can I when I love them both? Very well, I will draw lots. Whichever one's name comes up is for me and I am for her even though I love them both.

So 'Umar ﷺ ordered him to do that. He drew a name and divorced the other. 'Umar ﷺ then went to him and said, "Listen, O man, listen carefully and remember what I say. Whoever enters our Dîn and then apostates will be killed by us. Beware of leaving Islâm. Beware that I should hear that you have sexually approached the sister whom you have divorced, for then I will stone you to death."

'Umar ﷺ continued his journey until he reached a district of Banû Murrah. There he saw some people who were made to stand in the sun as punishment.

'Umar ﷺ : Why are these people being punished like this?

Muslims : They have outstanding land-tax.

'Umar ﷺ : What excuse do they offer?

Muslims : They say, "We do not find enough to pay."

'Umar ﷺ : Leave them and do not burden them with what they are unable to bear. I have heard Rasûlullâh ﷺ say, "Do not punish people wrongfully in the world lest Allâh punishes you on the Day of Judgement."

He then released them.

9) Meeting Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ

When he reached Wâdî al-Qurâ, the people informed him that there lived at the spring an old man who had a friend whom he dearly loved. His friend had said to him, "Let me share your wife in exchange for herding your camels. I will get her for a day and night and you will get her for a day and night."

The old man replied, "We are in agreement" and was pleased with the arrangement.

'Umar ﷺ summoned them and they were brought to him.

'Umar ﷺ : Woe unto you two. What is your religion?

The two friends : Islâm.

'Umar ﷺ : Then what is this that I have heard of you?

The two : What is it?

He then told them what the bedouins had told him.

Old man : O Commander of the Believers, it is correct.

'Umar ﷺ : Did you two not know that that is forbidden in Islâm?

The two : By Allâh! No, we did not know.

'Umar ﷺ : O old man, what made you do such an abomination?

Old man : I am an aged man and have no-one else to depend on. So I said to him, "Will you help me with herding and watering my animals in exchange for a share of my wife?" Only now do I know that it is forbidden and will not do it.

'Umar ﷺ : Take your wife by the hand. Not even I have a right to her. O young man, beware of coming near her. If I hear that you do I will strike off your neck.

He then continued until he reached the Syrian border.

Aslam bin Barqân, the freed slave of 'Umar ﷺ narrates:

When he reached Syria we saw a group of horsemen. 'Umar ﷺ said to az-Zubayr ﷺ, "Hurry and investigate them."

Az-Zubayr ﷺ hastened towards them and found them to be Yamanîs. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had sent them to get news on 'Umar ﷺ.

Az-Zubayr ﷺ narrates:

They made salâm to me and said, "O young man, from where do you come?"

Az-Zubayr ﷺ : From the city of Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

Yamanis : In what state did you leave the people?

Az-Zubayr ﷺ : Good.

Yamanîs : What is 'Umar ﷺ doing? Is he coming to us or not?

Az-Zubayr ﷺ : Who are you?

Yamanîs: We are 'Arabs of Yaman. Abu 'Ubaydah ﷺ sent us to get news on 'Umar ﷺ.

I returned and reported to 'Umar ﷺ who said, "You were correct in not replying."

Another group then came and asked about 'Umar ﷺ who said, "Here, I am 'Umar. What do you want?"

They replied, "O Commander of the Believers, eyes flow with tears and necks stretch in anticipation of your coming. Perhaps Allâh will grant you victory over Baytul Muqaddas."

They returned to the Muslim camp and announced, "O Muslims, rejoice at 'Umar 's ﷺ coming."

The Muslims were excited and all wanted to mount their horses to welcome him, but Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called out, "I command you to keep to your posts."

He then left with a group of Muhâjirîn ﷺ and Ansâr ﷺ. Umar ﷺ saw that he was fully armed with a bow strung around his shoulders and mounted on a she-camel covered with a cloak-like wrap with a halter of knitted hair. They both seated their camels, dismounted and met each other on foot.

Abû 'Ubaydah stretched his hand out. 'Umar shook it. They then hugged each other and made salâm. The others then made salâm to 'Umar. They remounted and led the way, speaking to each other all the way back to Baytul Muqaddas *(Probably al-Jâbiyah is meant here - translator's note)*. 'Umar then led the Muslims in Salâtul Fajr after which he delivered an excellent sermon. In it he said, "*Praise be to Allâh, the Most Praiseworthy, the Most Magnificent, the Strongest, the Most Powerful, the One who always does as He pleases. Allâh Most High has honoured us with Islâm and guided us through Muhammad upon whom be the choicest salutations and peace. He freed us from misguidance. He united us after we were divided. He united our hearts after they were filled with mutual hatred. So praise Him upon these favours and you will be entitled to more because Allâh Himself says :*

لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

If you are grateful I will definitely grant you more. If you are ungrateful then know that My punishment is severe. [14:7]

مَن يَهْدِ ٱللَّهُ فَهُوَ ٱلْمُهْتَدِ وَمَن يُضْلِلْ فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُۥ وَلِيًّا مُّرْشِدًا

He whom Allâh guides is the real guided one while you will never find any guiding friend for he whom He allows to go astray. [18:17]

At that point a priest who was present stood up and exclaimed, "*God* will never let anyone go astray!"

When he repeated his words 'Umar said, "If he repeats what he said then strike off his neck."

He then continued the sermon, "*I strongly advise you to fear Allâh Who alone will remain while everything besides Him will perish; Whose friends can only benefit through obeying Him; Whose enemies can only be destroyed through defying him. O people, pay your Zakâh with a clean heart desiring no reward or thanks for it from the creation. Understand what you are encouraged towards for indeed the intelligent man is most protective of his Dîn. Fortunate is he who takes lessons from others. Behold! The most evil action is innovations in Islâm. Hold firmly onto the Sunnah* of

your Prophet ﷺ. Moderation in following the Sunnah is better than great effort in following innovations. Keep firmly to the Qurân which contains all kinds of cure and rewards."

"O people, Rasûlullâh ﷺ stood amongst us just as I am standing amongst you and said, 'Follow my Sahâbah, then those who follow them, then those who follow the followers. Thereafter lies will prevail until that person whose testimony is not accepted will testify and he whose oath is not accepted will take oath.' "

"So whoever desires to reside in the centre of Jannah should keep to the community of Muslims and seek protection against the Devil. Nobody should be in privacy with a strange women for the Devil makes the third. A believer is he who will be pleased with her piety and displeased with her evil (not appearance). Guard your Salâh! Guard your Salâh!"

10) Meeting Bilâl ؓ

After the sermon he sat down while Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ reported what had transpired with the Romans. 'Umar ؓ was astonished, sometimes he wept and sometimes he remained still. They continued like this until the time of Salâtuzh-Zhur. Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ then said, "O Commander of the Believers, I will ask Bilâl to proclaim the athân."

Bilâl ؓ had settled down in that region. Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ brought him before 'Umar ؓ to whom he rendered salâm and respects. The Muslims asked 'Umar ؓ to ask Bilâl to give the athan, so he said, "O Bilâl, the Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ ask you to proclaim the athân and remind them of the times of their Prophet."

"Yes," replied Bilâl ؓ.

When he declared, "Allâhu Akbar!" they got goose-pimples and their bodies quivered. When he said, "I testify that there is no deity except Allâh. I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh!" they wept so much that their hearts broke with the mention of Allâh and His Rasûl ﷺ.

After completing Salâh he sat down before 'Umar ؓ.

Bilâl ؓ : O Commander of the Believers, the governors and armies of Syria eat bird-flesh and bread of sifted flour and other such foods which the poor Muslims never see or touch. Whereas everybody will perish, his wealth will be dust and so our

destination is dust. *(The eating of such luxuries was contrary to his ascetic nature - translator's note).*

Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ : Prices are low in these lands. We eat all those things Bilâl mentions for the same amount of money we would spend in al-Hijâz in a given period.

'Umar ﷺ.: Then there is no harm. Eat as much as much you like. However, I will not leave here until you compile a register of all the poor Muslims who live in these towns and cities so that I can stipulate for each household sufficient wheat, barley, honey, olive-oil and other necessities. This is to come from the governors and is separate from what comes from my side from the state-treasury. If they fail to do this, I will dismiss them.

'Umar ﷺ then intended mounting his camel. He was dressed in woollen rags patched in twenty-four places, some of the patches being of leather. *(In that era cloth was expensive and leather more freely available – translator's note).* The Muslims therefore said, "O Commander of the Believers, why do you not mount a better camel and wear some better white clothes?"

'Umar ﷺ did this.

Az-Zubayr ﷺ narrates:

I estimate that the robes were worth fifteen dirham and were of Egyptian origin. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ gave him the linen cloth which was neither new nor worn-out and he draped it over his shoulder. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ presented him with a grey Turkish horse captured from the horses of the Romans. When 'Umar ﷺ mounted it, it started galloping swiftly. He quickly dismounted and said, "Forgive my mistake and Allâh will forgive your mistake on the Day of Judgement. Your ruler was almost destroyed by the vanity and pride which had entered his heart. I have heard Rasûlullâh ﷺ saying, 'He who has an atom of pride in him will not enter Jannah.' Your white robe and swift horse were close to ruining me."

He then stripped off the white linen and put on his patched rags.

11) The world tries to seduce 'Umar ﷺ

Al-Wâqidî narrates:

'Ubâdah bin 'Awf ad-Dînurî was a great scholar,who would speak in rhymed sentences. He was reading.the stories of the conquests of Syria and Baytul Muqaddas

to us. When he mentioned 'Umar's ﷺ clothes he said, "My heart contains something which people would want to overlook."

I said, "Tell me and do not fear the truth for fearing the Truth leads to Hell. Truth is a trust and lying is a betrayal."

He said, "When 'Umar ﷺ put on his rags a second time he distinguished himself in his garb of poverty. The whole universe was astonished at his ascetism and patience at that time when the world had presented to him desirable adornments i.e. the horse and linen."

"The world then appeared in a form of a woman. She was completely decorated from head to toe to seduce him. She was hoping to negate all his struggles against his carnal self. She became visible to him, coming before him with her beautiful clothing and false pomp seeking to trade with him. That is, she threatened that if 'Umar ﷺ would not love her then he would not be able to attain her, nor would the world serve him anymore."

"'Umar ﷺ however maintained the people's obedience to him by means of his blameless character. She was desirous of trapping him and in her failure she resembled the description (of the woman who tried to seduce Yûsuf ﷺ):

She is madly in love with him. Verily we see her to be clearly astray.

"She then said, 'O 'Umar ﷺ, you have been given rule over my Earth, therefore you will have to take me as your share as well. No government can last without fine clothing, delicious food and harshness towards the citizenry.'"

" 'Umar ﷺ replied, 'Go away! I am not one of your men, nor am I of those who will fall in your traps and charms. Do you not know that I have dedicated myself to oppose you? Your appearing like this before me does not concern me. What does concern me is my mission to uphold the work of the master of all the nations, until I conquer the lands of Rome and Persia.'"

"The effects of his struggle against his carnal self then became visible on her face. This struggle was in line with what Allâh commands:

وَجَٰهِدُواْ فِي ٱللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِۦ

And struggle in the Path of Allâh as it should be struggled.
[22:78]

I liked these words and connected what he said to the Hadîth of Rasûlullâh ﷺ:

"There is some magic in speech."

12) 'Umar ﷺ arrives at Baytul Muqaddas

'Umar ﷺ travelled, intending to traverse the mountain-pass through until Baytul Muqaddas. A group of Muslims came to meet him. They were wearing brocade they had acquired from al-Yarmuk. He ordered dust to be flung in their faces and tore their brocade.

When he reached Baytul Muqaddas he called out, "Allâhu Akbar! O Allâh, grant us an easy victory and send us Your helping power."

The tribes and leaders came to meet him. He continued until he reached Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ where a tent of camel-hair was pitched for him. He sat down in it on the bare ground and then arose to pray four rak'ât.

The Muslims proclaimed, "Lâ ilâha illallâh wallâhu Akbar." The people of Baytul Muqaddas heard and the patriarch said to them, "Woe unto you! Why are the 'Arabs making a noise for no reason? Go and investigate."

One of them who knew 'Arabic called out to the Muslims, "O 'Arabs, what is happening?"

A Muslim replied, "The Commander of the Believers, 'Umar bin al-Khattâb has come to us from al-Madînah. We are shouting for joy."

The man went to inform the patriarch who bowed his head in silence.

After having led the Muslims in Salâtul Fajr the next day, 'Umar ﷺ said to Abû'Ubaydah ﷺ, "O 'Âmir, go and inform the people that I have arrived."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ went and called out, "O people of this city, the Commander of the Believers has arrived. What will you do about what you had previously said?"

The patriarch was informed. He came, wearing monk's garb surrounded by the monks, priests and bishops. He carried in front of him the special cross which they only took out on festivals. With him was Batlic, the governor, who said, "O Father,

you should be able to recognise him with certainty. Failing that we will not open the gates and will fight until either we or they are destroyed."

Patriarch : I will do that.

The two climbed the wall. The governor stood at the patriarch's side with the cross before them. They called out to Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ, "What do you want, old man?"

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ.: This is 'Umar ؓ, Commander of the Believers. There is no commander above him. Now come to receive his amnesty, to surrender and to pay the Jizyah.

Patriarch : O man, if he is really the highest ranking then let him approach us so that we can recognise his characteristics. Let him come out alone from amongst you and stand directly in line with us so that we can see him. If he is the man described in the scriptures then we will come down and seek amnesty and pay the Jizyah. If it is not him then you will get nothing but battle from us.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ returned to inform 'Umar ؓ. When he wanted to go his men said, "O Commander of the Believers, are you going to them without any weapons, all alone and only wearing these rags? We fear treachery against you."

'Umar ؓ recited:

قُل لَّن يُصِيبَنَآ إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ ٱللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَىٰنَا
وَعَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۚ

Say: Nothing will afflict us except that which Allâh has decreed for us. He is our Protector. Upon Allâh should the Believers rely. [9:51]

He then called for his camel which he mounted. He wore nothing besides his rags and a cotton cap on his head. Only Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ accompanied him and rode ahead of him. When they came to the patriarch and governor and stopped in line with them, Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ called out, "This is the Commander of the Believers."

The patriarch rubbed his eyes, looked and shouted out loud, "This is he who is described in our books, the man who will conquer our city without doubt."

He then called out to his people, "Woe unto you! Go down for amnesty and protection. By God! This is the mentioned companion of Muhammad bin 'Abdillâh."

13) Conquest of Baytul Muqaddas

When the Romans heard the patriarch they rushed down, having been severely taxed by the siege, and opened the gates. They went to 'Umar ﷺ seeking his guarantees and offering the Jizyah. This only humbled 'Umar ﷺ and he prostrated his head on the camel's hump out of gratitude to Allâh. He dismounted and said, "Return to your city with the guarantees you seek since you have agreed to pay Jizyah."

They returned without locking the gates, while he too returned to the Muslim camp to spend the night.

In the morning 'Umar ﷺ finally entered the city. This was on a Monday and he remained there until Friday. Then he marked off a plane in the East which became Masjid 'Umar ﷺ. Here he led his men in Salâtul Jum'ah. While the Muslims were thus engaged the Romans thought of acting treacherously. They said to Abû al-Ja'îd who had helped the Muslims at al-Yarmûk and had now settled here with all his wealth and family, "What do you think of betraying them while they are engaged in their prayers without weapons or protection against being killed?"

Abû al-Ja'îd : O people, do not do this. Do not betray them. If you are going to do this I will inform them.

Romans : Then what should we do?

Abû al-Ja'îd : Display all your worldly goods to them. Whoever sees them will not be able to control himself. If they then seek to seize it wrongfully then you will have an excuse to do as you please.

The Romans therefore brought out all their finery and lined it up in the streets through which the Muslims used to pass. The Muslims were amazed but none of them came near nor touched the goods of the Romans. All they said was, "Praise be to Allâh Who has granted us control over the houses of people such as these. If He had to regard the world equal to the wing of a mosquito He would not have granted a Disbeliever a drop of water to drink."

'Awf bin Sâlim narrates:

By Allâh! Not a single Muslim took anything from them nor touched their goods.

Abû al-Ja'îd then said to them, "These are the people whom God has described in the Torah and Gospel. They will remain on the Truth and none will be able to approach them for as long as they remain like this."

14) The Rabbi's prophecy

'Umar ﷺ remained in Baytul Muqaddas for ten days.

Shahr bin Hawshab narrates from Ka'b al-Ahbâr:

After 'Umar ﷺ made peace with the people of Baytul Muqaddas, he entered the city and remained there for ten days. I came to him from a Palestinian village where I was staying, to make salâm to him and embrace Islâm at his hands. My father was the greatest scholar of what had been revealed to Mûsâ bin 'Imrân ﷺ. He loved me dearly. He did not hide anything from me, but taught me whatever the people knew. At the time of his death he called me and said, "O my son, you know that I never hid any of my knowledge from you because I feared that you may end up following some liar who might appear. I have hidden two pages in that hole in the wall which you can see. Do not take them or read them until you hear of the coming of the Prophet of the final era whose name is Muhammad. If Allâh wills good unto you, you will follow him."

He then died after giving me this testament and I buried him. After the mourning period nothing was more beloved unto me than having to look at those two pages. I opened them and they read:

> *There is no deity besides Allâh. Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh, he is the seal of all Prophets, there is no prophet to come after him. His birthplace is Makkah. His migration is to Taybah (al-Madînah). He is neither rude, nor hard-hearted, nor boisterous. His Ummah are those who praise Allâh in every condition. Their tongues are ever moist with, "Lâ ilâha illallâh" and "Allâhu Akbar." They will be victorious over all their enemies. They wash their faces and cover the middle of their bodies. Their scripture is stored in their hearts. They are merciful to each other just as prophets are merciful towards*

their followers. They will be the first nation to enter Paradise on the Day of Judgement.

When I read all that I said to myself, “My father never taught me anything greater than this.”

I remained in this state after the death of my father for as long as Allâh willed until I heard of a prophet proclaiming himself in Makkah and he repeated his claims. I said, “By Allâh! It must be him.”

I continued to investigate him until it was said to me that he had departed for Yathrib (al-Madînah). I continued to follow his progress until he waged war on his enemies and conquered them. By the time I made preparations to travel to him I heard that he had died and that revelation had come to an end.

I said to myself, “Perhaps he was not the one I was waiting for.”

I then dreamt that the gates of the sky were opened and that droves of angels were descending saying, “The soul of Rasûlullâh ﷺ has been taken. Revelation has been cut off from the people of Earth.”

I returned to my people’s abode where news reached us that his Ummah was now headed by a man called Abû Bakr. I said, “I shall go to him,” but I hardly had a chance when his armies invaded Syria and he died. It was said that his successor is called ‘Umar. I said, “I will not enter this religion until I have investigated it.”

While I was waiting like that, ‘Umar رضي الله عنه had reached Baytul Muqaddas and had made peace with her people. I noticed how he fulfilled his word and how the enemies of the Muslims were defeated and so said to myself, “This is certainly the Ummah of the Unlettered Prophet.”

My heart told me to enter this religion.

By Allâh! One night as I was standing on my roof a Muslim passed by reciting:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ ءَامِنُواْ بِمَا نَزَّلۡنَا مُصَدِّقٗا لِّمَا مَعَكُم مِّن
قَبۡلِ أَن نَّطۡمِسَ وُجُوهٗا فَنَرُدَّهَا عَلَىٰٓ أَدۡبَارِهَآ أَوۡ نَلۡعَنَهُمۡ كَمَا لَعَنَّآ
أَصۡحَٰبَ ٱلسَّبۡتِۚ وَكَانَ أَمۡرُ ٱللَّهِ مَفۡعُولًا

O those who have been given the previous scriptures! Believe in what We have now revealed which is a confirmation of that which you already have before We flatten your faces to resemble the backs of Your heads or curse them as We cursed those who violated the Sabbath. Verily Allâh's order is always fulfilled. [4:47]

By Allâh! When I heard this I feared that I would wake up in the morning with my face transformed and I would have loved nothing better than if morning never came."

15) Ka'b the rabbi embraces Islâm

In the morning I left my house and made enquiries as to where 'Umar ﷺ was. When it was said to me that he was in Baytul Muqaddas, I went and found that he had finished leading his men in Salâtul Fajr at the Rock. I went up to him and made salâm to him which he replied to.

'Umar ﷺ : Who are you?

Ka'b : I am Ka'b al-Ahbâr (Ka'b of the rabbis). I have come to embrace Islâm because I have found the description of Muhammad ﷺ and his Ummah in the revealed scriptures. Allâh, Most Honourable and Majestic, had revealed to Mûsâ ﷺ, "I have not created any creation more noble to Me than the Ummah of Muhammad. Were it not for him I would not have created Paradise, Hell, Heaven or Earth. His Ummah is the best of all ummahs and his Dîn is the best dîn. I am sending him in the final era. His Ummah will be shown mercy. He is the Prophet of mercy. He is the Unlettered Prophet from the lowlands of West Arabia. He is of the Quraysh tribe and is merciful unto the Believers but hard against the Disbelievers. His private life is just like his public life. His word does not oppose his deed. He treats the near one and far one equally. His Sahâbah are merciful unto each other and keep ties to each other."

'Umar ﷺ : O Ka'b, do you speak the truth?

Ka'b : By Allâh! Yes. Allâh hears what I say and knows what the hearts conceal.

'Umar ﷺ : All praise belongs to Allâh who honoured, ennobled, elevated and showed mercy unto us through His mercy Muhammad ﷺ. O Ka'b, why do you not enter Islâm right now?

Ka'b : O Commander of the Believers, first tell me, is there any mention of Ibrâhîm ﷺ in your revealed Book with regard to your religion?

'Umar ﷺ : Yes.

وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَآ إِبْرَٰهِـۧمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ يَـٰبَنِىَّ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ ٱصْطَفَىٰ لَكُمُ
ٱلدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ أَمْ كُنتُمْ شُهَدَآءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ
يَعْقُوبَ ٱلْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنۢ بَعْدِى قَالُوا۟ نَعْبُدُ
إِلَـٰهَكَ وَإِلَـٰهَ ءَابَآئِكَ إِبْرَٰهِـۧمَ وَإِسْمَـٰعِيلَ وَإِسْحَـٰقَ إِلَـٰهًا وَٰحِدًا
وَنَحْنُ لَهُۥ مُسْلِمُونَ

And Ibrâhîm left testament of it to his sons and Ya'qûb also (did this). He (Ibrâhîm) said, "O my sons verily Allâh has chosen for you this religion so do not die except as those who submit." Or were you witness when death approached Ya'qûb and he said, to his sons, "What will you worship after me?" They replied, "We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Ibrâhîm, Ismâ'îl and Ishâq. He is one god and to Him do we submit." [2:133]

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَٰهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَـٰكِن كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُّسْلِمًا

Ibrâhîm was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but was one who separated himself from false gods and submitted to Allâh as a Muslim. [3:67]

أَفَغَيْرَ دِينِ ٱللَّهِ يَبْغُونَ وَلَهُۥٓ أَسْلَمَ

Should they seek a religion other than Allâh's whereas all who are in the Heavens and Earth submit to Him? [3:83]

وَمَن يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ ٱلْإِسْلَٰمِ دِينًا فَلَن يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ

He who seeks a Dîn other than Islâm will never have it accepted from him. [3:85]

قُلْ إِنَّنِى هَدَىٰنِى رَبِّىٓ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ
دِينًا قِيَمًا مِّلَّةَ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ حَنِيفًا

Say: My Rabb has guided me to the Straight Path - the upright religion, the way of Ibrâhîm. [6:161]

وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِى ٱلدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ ۚ مِّلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ ۚ
هُوَ سَمَّىٰكُمُ ٱلْمُسْلِمِينَ مِن قَبْلُ

Allâh has not caused you difficulty in religion. It is the way of your forefather Ibrâhîm. He already called you Muslims from before. [22:78]

Ka'b : O Commander of the Believers, I testify that there is no deity except Allâh and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh.

'Umar ﷺ (delighted) : Will you come with me to al-Madînah to benefit by visiting Rasûlullâh's ﷺ grave?

Ka'b : Yes, O Commander of the Believers, I will do that.

'Umar ﷺ then left after writing out the treaty allowing the people of Baytul Muqaddas to remain in their lands upon payment of Jizyah. He went with his companions up to al-Jâbiyah. There he compiled his register and took the state's one-fifth share of the booty which Allâh had granted to the Muslims.

He then divided Syria into two zones: Abu 'Ubaydah ﷺ was given direct responsibility from Hawrân to Aleppo and surrounds and was ordered to conquer Aleppo. Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ, under Abu 'Ubaydah's ﷺ supervision, was given Palestine, Baytul Muqaddas and the coast and was ordered to conquer Caesarea.

(See Appendix E - translator).

Most of the army was to remain with Abu 'Ubaydah ﷺ and Khâlid ﷺ was to stay with him. He sent 'Amr bin al-'Âs ﷺ to Egypt and appointed 'Amr bin Sa'îd al-Ansârî as judge of Hims.

'Umar ﷺ then left with Ka'b for al-Madînah. The people of al-Madînah feared that he would remain in Syria once he saw all her fruits and cheap prices as well as it being sacred land and home to the prophets and the place of gathering for the Day of Judgement. They would come out daily hoping to see him coming. So when he finally returned, the city was filled with excitement and the Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ rejoiced at seeing him. They made salâm to him, welcomed him and congratulated him for what Allâh had conquered at his hands. He went straight to the Masjid, made salâm to Rasûlullâh ﷺ and Abû Bakr ﷺ and prayed two Raka'ât. He called Ka'b and said, "Relate to the people what you saw on the two sheets."

Ka'b's narration only increased their faith.

16) The author repeats his reason for compiling the book

I (al-Wâqidî) narrate from Ahmad bin al-Husayn bin al-'Abbâs who is known as Abû Sufyân the grammarian, who narrates from Abû Ja'far bin Ahmad bin 'Ubayd an-Nâsikh who narrates from 'Abdullâh bin Aslam az-Zuhrî and 'Abdullâh bin Yahyâ az-Zarqî who narrates from all those whose names have been mentioned at the beginning of this book.

These people lived quite recently and were contemporaries of each other. Allâh is the one who saves us from additions and subtractions. Truth is a trust and falsehood is a betrayal. I swear by Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity and Who is the Knower of the invisible and visible! I have evaluated and narrated these reports on the conquests on a basis of utter honesty so that I can establish the great value of the Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and refute the Shi'is who abandon both the Sunnah and what is obligatory. Allâh Most High has willed that were it not for them then those lands would not have been in the possession of the Muslims and knowledge of this Dîn would not have spread. Allâh be praised at their deeds! They waged Jihâd as it should be waged, no doubt. The King who has all power has said about them:

Amongst them are those who have fulfilled their vows and amongst them are those who await. [33:23]

17) Yazîd ﷺ reaches Caesarea

'Umar ﷺ had appointed Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ over Syria and ordered him to conquer Aleppo, Antioch, Mafraq and their forts. He sent 'Amr bin al-Âs ﷺ to Egypt and Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ to the Syrian coast. Yazîd ﷺ thus reached Caesarea which was governed by Constantine, Heraclius's son. He had with him a garrison of 80,000 Romans, Christian 'Arabs and North Europeans. When he saw Yazîd ﷺ coming he requested reinforcements from his father, who sent the governor of Mar'ash with 20,000 North European warriors, and also sent mounts laden with provisions and fodder.

Yazîd ﷺ felt that he would not be able to overcome them so he wrote to 'Umar ﷺ:

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

From : Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân, the governor of SW Syria

To : 'Umar bin al-Khattâb

I have reached Caesarea which I have found to be heavily garrisoned. There is no way of conquering her. Constantine requested reinforcements from his father who sent him a further 20,000 troops under the governor of Mar'ash. He receives mounts loaded with provisions and fodder daily.

Was-salâm.

He sent the letter with 'Amr bin Sâlim bin Humayd an-Nakha'î who arrived in al-Madînah and handed the letter to 'Umar ﷺ.

'Umar ﷺ : From whom is this letter?

'Amr : From your governor, Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ.

'Umar ﷺ read the letter and began worrying about Yazîd ﷺ. When 'Alî came and read the letter he said, "Do not worry about the Muslims. Allâh will conquer Caesarea through you. Reinforce Yazîd and write to him."

'Umar ﷺ therefore wrote to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who had 20,000 troops with him to reinforce Yazîd who only had 10,000 troops with him. When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ received the letter he sent 3,000 cavalry to Yazîd under Harb bin 'Adî.

18) The brothers of Aleppo

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ now had 17,000 mostly Yamanî troops left with him. He had agreed to a treaty with Qinsarîn and al-'Awâsim upon receiving payment of 15,000 Mithqâl (65.6 kg) of gold, 15,000 of silver, 1,000 robes of brocade and 500 Wasaq (96.4 t) of figs and olive-oil. Upon the expiry of the term of grace they brought what they had promised from their city. He wrote out the document and entered the city with Khâlid ﷺ and all the Muslim Chiefs and marked off a Masjid.

When the people of Aleppo heard of the 'Arabs entering Qinsarîn and of the further advance they became highly agitated. Aleppo belonged to two brothers who lived in a fort outside the city-limits. The two, Yûhannâ and Yûqannâ, had the same father and mother. Their father was the local king whose territories, farms and estates had stretched all the way from the mountains to the Euphrates River. He had ruled Aleppo unchallenged for years. Heraclius feared him and was forced to tolerate him in order to maintain the pretence of Imperial unity. When he seceded from the Roman Empire no troops were sent against him due to his great evil, conniving schemes and the strength of his dynasty. When he had passed through the rural districts of Antioch he decided to base himself in the fort of Aleppo. He strengthened it, added to its buildings and established himself in the land.

Upon his death the elder brother, Yûqannâ, succeeded him. He was a brave, war-mongering person who gathered wealth and initiated wars. His evil could not be checked. His younger religious brother, Yuhannâ, had become a monk and had left politics to him. He was the most learned scholar of his time. When they heard of Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ advance he asked Yûqannâ, "What have you decided upon?"

Yûqannâ : I will fight the 'Arabs. I will not let them come near our lands. They will see that I am not like the governors of Syria whom they had encountered until now.

Yûhannâ had studied the Gospel and the Psalms. His sole occupation was the building of churches and monasteries and clothing and caring for the bishops, priests and monks. When he heard that al-'Awâsim had been conquered by the sword and Qinsarîn by treaty and that the 'Arab cavalry was advancing towards the Euphrates and al-Baqâ', he went to his elder brother, Yûqannâ, and said, "O brother, I wish to privately consult with you tonight to reveal my views and secrets and to learn yours."

Yûqannâ agreed and so they met that night in a building within the fort which their father used.

Yûqannâ : O brother, do you not see what is befalling us from these 'Arabs whose stomachs are empty and bodies naked? Do you not see that the people of Syria are being killed and their wealth plundered and that these people do not invade any city except that they always conquer it and rule over its people? How should we deal with them? It is as if they are already here.

Yûhannâ : O brother, if you really seek my opinion then I will sincerely advise you and will not deceive you if you accept my advice. I may be younger than you but I have deeper insight then you. I swear by Christ and the Communion! If you accept what I say your status will remain high and your life and wealth will be saved.

Yûqannâ : O my brother, I know you only to be a well-wisher. What is your opinion?

Yûhannâ : Send an envoy to the 'Arabs. Give them whatever they want. Surrender and fix an annual tribute which you will pay for as long as they have the upper hand.

Yûqannâ (angry) : May Christ disfigure you! What useless speech. Your mother only gave birth to you as a monk and priest whom I cannot follow. Monks do not have hearts because they only eat lentils, olive-oil and herbs and do not eat meat and know no luxury. They have no insight into war and know nothing about encountering men. As for me, I am a king and the son of a king. All they will get from me is war. The kings of the world will not see me weak. Woe unto you! How can we surrender our city to the 'Arabs without even putting up a fight?

Yûhannâ (smiling) : O my brother, by Christ! I see your end coming for you are a tyrant who enjoys bloodshed. I do not think that you will ever be able to gather as many troops as Heraclius did at al-Yarmûk or at Ajnâdayn. These are such people whom God helps against us. Fear God and do not run to your own death.

Yûqannâ : You praise these 'Arabs so much. I am not like those whom they had previously encountered and whom you have mentioned. Do not dare compare me to them! I know that all the cities about whom you speak surrendered, whether forcibly or peacefully, but in either case they had no excuse and did not strive to their full extent. For some time now I have been gathering much wealth to save myself from all harm and will gather a great force to fight the 'Arabs. If the Cross grants me victory over them and Christ helps me against them I will chase them all the way back to al-Hijâz and will become the leading king. When I return to Syria Heraclius will have no power against me. If the 'Arabs defeat me then I will take refuge in my great fort. I have prepared provisions and food which will last me for the rest of my life. I will stay here and rule with honour until the end of my days. I will not stretch my hand towards the 'Arabs nor will I spend any money wastefully. Do not oppose me concerning the 'Arabs nor call me to surrender for then I will fight you before I fight them.

The Devil thus captured his heart and made his view appealing to him. Yûhannâ then said, "It is forbidden for me to speak to you until you do as I say."

He then left angrily.

In the morning, Yûqannâ gathered all those Armenians, Christian 'Arabs etc. who had fled to him and joined his service. He armed whoever wanted weapons and distributed money amongst them. He began to belittle the 'Arabs, "They are few and we are many more than them, and they are now divided – some are at Caesarea and others are going to Egypt."

He resolved to fight Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ before the Muslims could reach him. He therefore appointed Caracus to defend the city while he set off with 12,000 armoured men and others who wore no armour. Ahead of him were his flags and crosses including a jewelled gold cross. He was surrounded by 1,000 youth wearing brocade embroidered with gold.

19) The ambush

Ibn Tha'labah al-Kindî narrates:

After Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had conquered Qinsarîn and received 'Umar's ﷺ letter instructing him to reinforce Yazîd ﷺ, he stayed at Qinsarîn and resolved upon invading Aleppo. He had sent 3,000 heavily armed horsemen to Yazîd ﷺ and summoned a great, strong, experienced warrior from Banû Damrah. Once this

warrior began fighting, he was not scared of the enemy regardless of their number. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ placed him in charge of 1,000 reconnaisance troops and said to him, "O Ka'b, do not attack an army which you are powerless against. Your only duty is to investigate the Christians. I will be right behind you."

Ka'b bin Damrah ﷺ then left for Aleppo.

Yûqannâ sent many spies ahead of him to return and report to him. They reported that the 'Arab cavalry was arriving to fight him.

Yûqannâ : How many are they?

Spies : They are 100 horsemen camped six miles from your city.

He then placed some of his men in ambush while he took the rest with him against the Muslims.

Yûqannâ encountered the Muslims who had halted at a river and were watering their horses and performing wudû. When they saw the army and the cross in front of Yûqannâ they started shouting at each other and mounted their horses. Ka'b ﷺ estimated the enemy to be 5,000. He did not know that Yûqannâ had left the rest behind hiding in ambush.

Ka'b ﷺ called out to the Muslims, "O helpers of Allâh's Dîn, I estimate the enemy to be 5,000. Consider them to be your booty. However, each of you will have to fight five of them."

"By Allâh!" the Muslims responded, "Why not?"

They charged, encouraging each other. When they neared, Yûqannâ ordered his men to attack. The Christians charged and the two forces clashed. Both sides were prepared to fight to the death. The Muslims were certain of victory and of acquiring booty when suddenly the enemy came out of hiding and attacked from behind.

Mas'ûd bin 'Awn al-'Ajjî narrates:

I was one of the scouts sent by Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ under Ka'b bin Damrah ﷺ and participated in the battle between the two forces. While we were engaged in combat they sprang their ambush on us. We had not thought that they would be hiding behind us when suddenly we heard the pounding of hooves behind us. Initially we had been certain of victory but were now certain of defeat. We were trapped in the midst of Disbelievers. The Muslims were divided into three groups: one turned to flee; one turned to face the newcomers; and one under Ka'b ﷺ faced Yûqannâ and his men.

Allâh be praised for what the Kindah did that day. They fought so fiercely and gifted their lives to Allâh Most High until 100 of them were martyred at a single place.

(O Most Generous Allâh! Accept this sinful Kindî just as You accepted these Kindîs - translator).

The ambushers wreaked great havoc amongst us. Ka'b ﷺ became ever more anxious about the Muslims fighting them. He went around the Muslims calling out, "O help of Allâh, come down through the intercession of Muhammad. O Muslims, the moment of help arrives. You will be victorious."

The Muslims gathered around him suffering many injuries. 170 seniors were killed, including 'Abbâd bin 'Âsim an-Nakha'î, Zufar bin Umm Râdî, Hâzim bin Shihâb al-Muqrî, Sahl bin Ashyam, Rifâ'ah bin Muhsan and Ghânim bin Bard ﷺ who was amongst those who had participated in the Expedition of Chains and Tabûk with Rasûlullâh ﷺ and al-Yamâmah with Khâlid bin al-Walîd ﷺ.

How we regretted the loss of Suhayl. We counted forty wounds all on his front and not a single one on his back. Forty of the martyrs were great chiefs, but not a single Muslim died without first having killed several Christians. When the enemy saw how, despite being killed, the Muslims remained steadfast they wanted to flee. Yûqannâ held them back, "Woe unto you! The 'Arabs are but like wolves unto you. If they are attacked they flee and if they are left alone they become greedy."

Ka'b ﷺ was greatly grieved at those who had been killed under his flag. He dismounted, put on armour on top of the armour he already wore and tied a belt around his waist. He rubbed his face against the nose of his horse, Hitâl, and kissed him between the eyes. This stallion had participated in many battles with him, including ones with Rasûlullâh ﷺ. He said, "O Hitâl, this is your day. The outcome will be praiseworthy, so be firm in fighting in obedience to Allâh "

He remounted and paused in front of the ranks of the Muslims. Holding the flag in his hand he looked at the dead and was distressed. He waited for an army to arrive from Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ or at least some scouts, but saw no trace of any.

20) The delegation from Aleppo

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had halted his march towards Ka'b ﷺ upon receiving a delegation of Aleppans. When Yûqannâ had marched against the Muslims, the elders of the city

and the North Europeans had gathered and said, "O people, you know that the other Christians have surrendered to the 'Arabs. Some have even embraced their religion while others remain Christian under their rule. Those who have fought them have always lost. We propose that you go to their ruler to surrender our city and give him whatever he wants. If the Muslims defeat Prince Yûqannâ then we will be safe and have no fear of their violence. If Yûqannâ surrenders then we will have overtaken him. If he is victorious and safely returns then we will not tell him what we did."

They reached a consensus upon that and a delegation of thirty chiefs left taking a different road to that which Yûqannâ had taken. When they reached the Muslim camp they called out, "*Alghawth! Alghawth!*" which the 'Arabs understood to be a Greek request for immunity and thus they had been instructed by the Commander, "Whoever hears this call should not hasten to kill the caller or else he will be taken to task by Allâh on the Day of Judgement and 'Umar ﷺ will have nothing to do with the killer."

The 'Arabs now recognised the call and brought the Aleppans before Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ.

Khâlid ﷺ : Perhaps these Aleppans are seeking indemnity and wish to surrender.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : May Allâh make it so. If they surrender I will accept.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was unaware of the violent battle and massacre. The Aleppans had arrived at night and a fire was blazing before him. They saw some Muslims standing in Salâh while others were reciting the Qurân, so they said, "This is how they triumph over us."

The translator overheard them and informed Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who said, "We are a nation showered with divine grace. We are men who desire nothing but Allâh and His Messenger ﷺ. We are not weak in fighting the enemy."

After translating he asked them, "Who are you?"

Aleppans : We are the inhabitants of Aleppo – traders and chiefs, and we have come to surrender.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : How can we make peace with you when we have heard that your prince is adamant upon war against us and has strengthened his fort. He has filled it with food to last for years and has not only formed a new army but has increased it. So there can be no peace between us.

Aleppans : He went ahead of us to fight you. We have nothing to do with him.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : When did he leave?

Aleppans : He left at dawn. We left after him taking a different road. We sincerely hope that he will be destroyed because he is a great tyrant and will never surrender. He obeys his carnal lusts which can only destroy him.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ began to fear for the reconnaisance and exclaimed, "There is no power to avoid evil and no ability to do good except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty. By Allâh! Ka'b and his men are destroyed. Verily we belong to Allâh and to Him do we return!"

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ bowed his head.

The Aleppans said to one of their elders, "Speak to him about our peace."

When he did this, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ shouted, "There can be no peace with you!"

The elders feared for their lives and said, "The village and country folk have all taken refuge in our city. After surrendering we can help you to populate these lands and will even help you with the construction of buildings. We will live under your shadow for as long as you are just. If you refuse then the people will flee to the ends of the lands, spreading the news that you do not accept peaceful surrender. Not a single soul will then remain to populate your territories."

21) Terms of surrender

After the translation, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ merely stared at them. A red-faced man who was a sage of the Romans began shouting. He came forward and said in fluent 'Arabic, "O commander, listen to these words which God revealed in the scriptures to the Prophets..."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : We will listen. If it is true, then teach it to us. If it is not, then we will neither listen nor will we practise it.

Didah the sage : O commander, God has revealed this to His Prophets, "I am the Merciful Lord. I created mercy and placed it in the hearts of the Believers. I have no mercy for him who shows no mercy. I do good to him who does good. I exceed the limits with him who exceeds the limits. I forgive him who forgives. He who seeks Me will find Me. If someone helps a troubled person, I will grant him safety on the

Day of Judgement, expand his sustenance, bless his age, increase his family and help him against his enemy. He who thanks his benefactor in reality thanks Me."

So now we have come here, troubled and filled with fear. Forgive our mistakes, grant safety to our citizens and be good unto us.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ wept and recited:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ

Verliy Allâh loves those who do good. [2:195]

He then said, "O Allâh, convey salutations to Muhammad and the Muslims. By Allâh! It is with this that He sent our Prophet. He sent him for the entire creation. Praise be to Allâh for guiding us."

He then turned to the Muslims who included the chiefs of the Muhâjirîn and the Anṣâr and said, "Praise be to Allâh for guiding us. These traders and villagers are oppressed people. We should be kind unto them, accept their surrender and gladden their hearts. Once the city is in our hands the traders can supply us with fodder and inform us as to enemy actions and be helpful unto us."

Muslims : May Allâh keep the commander in a good state. The city is close to the fort. We have no guarantee that they will not spy out our weaknesses and report all our conditions to the enemy. It may be that these people intend tricking us. After all, their prince is out fighting us. How can they really be offering to surrender?"

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Keep good thoughts about Allâh and rely upon Him. Allâh will not hand us over to the enemy. May Allâh have mercy on the man who either speaks good or remains quiet. I will impose such terms which will benefit the Muslims.

He then turned to the Aleppans and said, "Your terms of surrender will be the same as that of Qinsarîn."

Aleppans : O commander, Qinsarîn is more ancient and has a larger population. Furthermore, many citizens fled due to the prince's tyranny. He has confiscated our wealth and grains and stored it all in his fort. None except the poor remain amongst us. We ask you to be kind unto us.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Then what can you offer?

Aleppans : Half of what Qinsarîn gave you.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : I accept on the condition that when we come against your prince you will supply us with food and fodder. You will come to buy and sell in our camp and will not hide your bread. You will inform us about our enemy and will not let any spy remain amongst us to spy upon us. If your prince comes fleeing to you, you will prevent him from reaching the fort.

Aleppans : O commander, as for preventing him from entering the fort, we cannot promise that which we cannot do. We have no power against him and his armies.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Very well, but you will have to take strong oaths in the Name of Allâh to fulfil all the other terms.

They all took the oaths he demanded and entered into the pact to include all the men, animals, children, women, slaves and all their households.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : You have taken oaths and we have accepted your word. If we find out that any of you have broken the terms or had information about your prince and did not inform us then we will kill him and take all his wealth and children and Allâh will not hold us accountable. If you break these terms then the treaty is cancelled and we have no responsibility towards you. As from the coming year, you will start to pay the Jizyah.

Sa'd bin 'Âmir at-Tanûfî narrates:

The Aleppans were happy with Abû 'Ubaydah's terms. They agreed and their names were taken down. After they intended departing Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ said, "Be at ease. I will send men to escort you because now it has become compulsory upon us to protect you until you return safely to your city."

"O commander," replied Dahdah, "We will take the same path as we originally took. We do not need anyone to accompany us."

He let them go and spent the rest of the night worrying about Ka'b ﷺ.

22) Allâh saves the Muslims

The delegation entered Aleppo after sunrise. One of the prince's men asked them, "From where are you coming? What are you doing?"

Thinking him to be one of them they informed him of the treaty. He left them and the citizens came out to welcome the delegation and questioned them. The delegates told them about the treaty and they rejoiced.

The man went to the prince. He was surrounding the Sahâbah ﷺ and thought that he had them under control. He was waiting for later that morning to attack them when his man arrived and said, "O prince, you do not know what is happening between you and your people."

Yûqannâ : Woe unto you! What is it?

Informant : They have surrendered to the 'Arabs. They might seize the fort and loot its wealth and women.

Upon hearing this Yûqannâ feared the loss of his fort and abandoned all thought of killing the remaining Muslims. He had already killed more than 200.

Ka'b ﷺ had fought hard and was fearing that their destruction was at hand. He narrates:

I was the commander at that battle and kept the men steady. Through my will-power I encouraged them to fight and made every effort in their defence. I was wounded and would have been overcome in battle so I took refuge with my men. I was still hoping for help from Allâh Most High and looked out for Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ flag, but that hope became ever more dim.

The battle lasted for a day and night until the morning of the second day. By Allâh! None of us even had the opportunity to perform Salâh, eat anything or drink a drop of water. I was wavering between hope and despair. I watched the Qinsarîn road, looking out for the flag of Islam, but there was no sign of it.

In the morning I saw some excitement at the ends of the enemy army. There was some commotion, so I said, "This can only mean that reinforcements have arrived from their city or Caesar." I then began reciting that which should be recited at the time of difficulty, "There is no ability to avoid evil or power to do good except through Allâh, Most High, Most Mighty."

I swear that I had hardly finished these words when I saw the enemy withdrawing. I shouted "All praise be to Allâh! The praise of the grateful ones!"

I thought that a voice must have shouted at them from the sky to scatter them or that angels had come down upon them just as they had done at Badr, but there remained no trace of them.

I wanted to chase them but the Muslims called out, "O Ka'b, where are you going? Are you not satisfied with what we went through? Stay here and be satisfied. We have suffered much, are tired and must still perform our Salâh. Our horses have to rest. It is only through the will of Allâh that they returned."

The Muslims stayed, drank water, performed wudû and performed those salawât which they had missed. They then ate and rested.

23) Yûqannâ's revenge

No new news of Ka'b ﷺ had reached Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. After leading the Salâtul Fajr he turned to the Muslims and addressed Khâlid ﷺ, "O Abû Sulaymân, your brother, Abû 'Ubaydah, did not sleep last night out of grief. While we have to be thankful for the conquests which Allâh has granted us, I fear that Ka'b's party has been massacred because the delegates told me that their prince has set out against them. I see no trace of them so I think that he must have met and killed all of them."

Khâlid ﷺ: By Allâh! I too could not sleep out of grief for them. What have you decided to do?

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ: We march.

He then issued the order and the Muslims began marching against Aleppo. Khâlid ﷺ led the vanguard and Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ led the rearguard. In a short while they came across the Muslims who were all sleeping. When the watchmen saw Khâlid ﷺ raising the flag above his head he did not recognise him and called out, "To arms, O helpers of Allâh's Dîn!"

The Muslims jumped out of their sleep like sleeping lions and mounted their horses. They charged ahead, but upon recognising the flag-bearer, exclaimed, "By Allâh! This is the flag of Islâm and the Muslims."

Khâlid ﷺ dismounted and made salâm to them. By that time the rearguard had also arrived. When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ saw Ka'b ﷺ he praised Allâh. Then when he and the Muslims saw all the martyrs lying on the ground their joy turned to grief and they exclaimed, "There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through

Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty. Verily we belong to Allâh and to Him we return."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ asked Ka'b ﷺ, "How were your men killed and who killed them?"

Ka'b ﷺ informed him about Yûqannâ's coming with his men until the Muslims could not even move. He then said, "We slept at night and then in the morning they just started shouting and left without a fight."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : The Causer of all causes is sufficient for us. If only Abû 'Ubaydah was killed instead of them and they were not killed under his flag.

He had the martyrs gathered in groups, prayed their Salâtul Janâzah and buried them with their weapons and blood. He then said, "I have heard Rasûlullâh ﷺ saying – "*On the day of Judgement Allâh will resurrect the martyrs killed in His Path with their blood on their bodies. The colour will be that of blood, but the smell will be that of musk. Light will glitter on them as they enter Jannah.*"

As he gazed at the martyrs lying in their still open graves, he said to Khâlid ﷺ, "If Allâh's enemy, Yûqannâ, reaches Aleppo and learns about the treaty he will severely punish them. I will go to them because it is our responsibility to defend them now that they are our subjects."

He departed and upon reaching Aleppo found Yûqannâ besieging the people, intending to massacre them. The army had shouted, "Woe unto you! You surrendered to the 'Arabs and became helpers to them against us."

Aleppans : We did that because they are always victorious.

Yûqannâ : Woe unto you! Christ is not pleased with what you have done. By Christ! I will massacre you all unless you come out and join me in fighting against them and break your treaty with them. Tell me now who initiated this treaty so that I can kill him first.

When they refused to obey him he said to his slaves, "Bring the following people for me to kill. My man met them and informed me who they were."

The slaves entered the city and began to kill the delegates in their beds and at the doors of their homes.

24) I die as a Muslim

Yûhannâ who was in the fort heard the uproar and saw that his brother had started a massacre. 300 had already been killed. He came out and shouted, "Easy! Do not do this. Verily Christ will be angry with you. He forbade us from killing our enemies so how can we kill our own co-religionists?"

Yûqannâ : They surrendered our city to the 'Arabs and helped them against us.

Yûhannâ : By Christ! The 'Arabs will never leave you and will take revenge against you.

Yûqannâ : Ha! Who is there that can take revenge against me?

Yûhannâ : Christ will slay you just as you have slayed these innocents.

Yûqannâ : Really? Well you were the one to lead them to this so now I will start with you.

He grabbed his brother and unsheathed his sword. When the monk saw the drawn sword he knew that his end was coming so he raised his head to the sky and proclaimed, "O Allâh, be my witness that I die as a Muslim, opposed to the religion of these people. I bear witness that there is no deity except Allâh and that Muhammad is His Messenger."

Turning to the prince he said, "Do as you please. Once you have killed me I will be entering gardens of bliss."

Yûqannâ, already infuriated at his people's surrender and fearing the Muslim arrival, there and then killed Yûhannâ.

Yûqannâ then turned to the Aleppans who were praying for help which was not forthcoming. They begged him for mercy but received no reply. He continued the massacre and their screams became ever louder. They were surrounded on all sides. When they had lost all hope help finally arrived - they saw the flags of the Muslims arriving.

Led by Khâlid, the Muslims proclaimed the Oneness of Allâh. When he heard the commotion and weeping he said to Abû 'Ubaydah, "By Allâh! As you have said the people under your responsibility have been destroyed."

He then called for his horse and flag-bearers and shouted, "O Disbelievers, leave our subjects alone" and attacked with the Muslims, working the sword amongst the enemy. Yûqannâ thereupon fled with his generals to the fort.

Mu<u>h</u>san bin 'Atrah narrates:

Allâh relieved the people of Aleppo by killing the disbelieving soldiers. Those who made it to the fort were saved but those who fled elsewhere were killed. Yûqannâ had massacred more than 300 of those who had surrendered to us while we killed more than 3,000 of his men. This was an amazing event which gladdened the Muslims. After we had killed the enemies and saved the Aleppans they narrated to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ how Yûqannâ had martyred his brother.

When the Muslims came, Yûqannâ and his men took refuge in the fort and prepared for a siege. He erected catapults and distributed much equipment for the siege and arranged much weaponry at the walls.

In the meantime the Aleppans brought forty generals to the Muslims.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Why have you captured these people?

Aleppans : They are Yûqannâ's men who fled to us. We did not want to hide them because they are not of us and are not included in the treaty.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ offered them Islâm, but only seven accepted. He had the rest beheaded and said to the Aleppans, "You have acted in good faith with regards to your side of the deal. Soon you will see from us that which will gladden you. You will join us in benefits and duties. Your prince has taken refuge in the fort. Do you know of any flaw in it so that we may reach it to fight him? If Allâh grants us victory we will give you a share of the booty as a reward for your good deed."

Aleppans : O commander, by God! We know of no flaw in it. Yûqannâ has cut off all roads and entrances to it. This is all we know. If he had not killed Yû<u>h</u>annâ then it would have been easy to take the fort.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ: What happened to him?

They told him what his brother had done to him and that he had declared his Islâm after raising his head to the sky. They said, "We did not hear everything that he said, but we did hear him saying - O Allâh, I bear witness that there is no deity except You; that 'Îsâ is Your slave and Messenger; and that Mu<u>h</u>ammad is your slave and Messenger through whom the line of prophethood ended. You made him the chief of all Messengers and there is no religion higher than his. So do as you please, O Yûqannâ. – So when he became a Muslim, Yûqannâ killed him."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ: Where did he kill him?

They took him, Khâlid ﷺ and a group of Muslims to the high part of the market. There they found Yûhannâ lying on his back, his finger still pointing to the sky, his face resembling a full moon. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ took the body, covered it in cloth, prayed over it and buried it at Abraham's Place.

25) Attack on the fort

A Muslim came and said, "May Allâh keep the commander in a good state. Look at these people. If they were really on our side they would have shown us the weak points of the enemy. By Allâh! They will never do that."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ turned to the Muslims and said, "Express your views, may Allâh have mercy upon you."

Yûnus bin 'Amr al-Ghassânî who knew Syria, her mountains, cities and roads well, said, "May Allâh keep the commander in a good state. Observe what I know of this land and hear my opinion."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ: Speak, Ibn 'Amr, for we regard you to be a well-wisher of the Muslims.

Yûnus : Allâh has conquered Syria through you – her soft land, her hard land, her mountains and her rough terrain. The leaders and defenders of disbelief have been killed. The remainder of their armies are behind the mountain passes which are rough and forbidding. The enemy is terrified due to the extermination inflicted upon them by Allâh. They no longer have any heart to fight the Muslims. So besiege this fort and raid the rest of the land with cavalry expeditions right up to the Euphrates River. These people have no provisions to withstand us.

Khâlid ﷺ *(smiling)* : What an excellent idea. I wish to add something, let us attack the fort, Perhaps Allâh will grant us an immediate victory. I fear that the Roman armies will attack us from another direction if we stay here too long and thus cut us off from the fort.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O Abû Sulaymân, you expressed a view and expressed it well. You spoke and spoke the truth.

He then ordered an attack on the fort. The horsemen dismounted and stripped off their excess clothing. Chiefs and slaves mixed. Each tribe began vying with each other and as the clans spread out they called to each other with poems and by mentioning their lineage.

Masrûq bin Mâlik narrates:

By Allâh! I never witnessed an attack on any Syrian fort greater than the attack on Aleppo's fort. Our attack was like a spinning windmill, killing with its rotation. In the first assault the warriors of Yaman and the chiefs of Rabî'ah and Mudar advanced one after the other. They attacked from a point where there was not even a road leading to it. As soon as they came near, the enemy opened fire with catapults and other weaponry. My companions and I were the closest, so we took fright and ran back, pushing each other out of the way, not thinking that any of us would survive. Defeat set in amongst the Muslims and many of us were shattered by the rocks. Some were killed by the rocks and others wounded. Amongst those killed at the siege of the fort were: 'Âmir bin al-Asla' ar-Raba'î, Mâlik bin Khaz'al ar-Raba'î, Hassân bin Hazhalah, Marwân bin 'Âbdillâh, Sulaymân bin Fârigh al-'Âmirî, 'Âttâf bin Sâlim al-Kilâbî, Surâqah bin Muslim bin 'Awf al-'Adawî, Yamanîs of the family of 'Âmir and Banû Kilâb and others and seven from Banû 'Abdillâh. Years later we would still see men who were crippled from that incident.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ raised his flag outside the city and called the Muslims to him. He said, "O people, you have fought outstandingly today. Now bury the martyrs and bandage your wounds."

The Muslims started doing that while the enemy rejoiced at the Muslim defeat. Yûqannâ said, "The Muslims will never come to the fort after today. If the siege continues then I will go and trick them."

26) The night raid

'Abdullâh bin Sulaymân ad-Dînûrî who narrates the conquest of Syria from reliable Muslims says: 'Amr narrated to me:

Yûqannâ selected 2,000 of his elite soldiers and said to them, "Go and hastily attack the edge of their camp when their fires are extinguished. Defend each other and plunder them."

He appointed his chief minister over them.

They left at night, circling the Muslims until they reached their destination. The Muslim Bedouin of Yaman such as the Murâd, Kilâb and their slaves had extinguished their fires.

'Abdullâh bin Safwân al-Bakkî narrates:

That night we were unarmed. We were complacent due to our numbers and had set no guard. Before we knew it, the enemy fully decorated in all their pomp, was attacking us. They shouted things in their language which we did not understand. They began striking us with their swords. The fortunate ones amongst us mounted their horses to seek safety, but did not know where to go or how to escape. The Muslims were brought to the ground and the call was raised, "To arms! To arms! By the Rabb of the Ka'bah! We have been hit."

The Muslims rushed to Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ tent calling, "O commander, Yûqannâ has taken us by surprise."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ mounted and went with some men around the camp. When the enemy commander saw the 'Arabs about to encounter him, he shouted to his men, "Whoever has taken anything should leave it and save himself."

They had taken about fifty of our men, mostly of Rabî'ah and Mudar. They gathered and left for the fort. Khâlid ﷺ and his men charged at them, cutting off about 100 of them and killing them all. When they reached the fort, Yûqannâ opened the gate and they entered.

After sunrise Yûqannâ called the fifty Muslim prisoners who were tied with ropes. He positioned them so that the Muslims could see them and hear them reciting, "Lâ ilâha illallâh Muhammadur Rasûlullâh ﷺ!" until he had killed every last one of them.

When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ saw that he ordered the announcer to proclaim, "On behalf of Allâh and His Rasûl, and as a command of the commander, Abû 'Ubaydah, no man will entrust his guard duty to anyone else. Every man will have to guard himself. No-one should speak to anyone else."

Everyone took their gear and went on guard.

Yûqannâ turned his attention to his next scheme. Despite the Muslim siege, his spies still managed to get to him and keep him informed, day and night. His best spies were Christian 'Arabs because they were fluent in Greek as well. He was sitting in his fort surrounded by his generals. They were feeling the pinch of the siege which was made worse by the fact that the Aleppans would immediately seize any of the Yûqannâ's men upon seeing them and hand them over to the Muslims. A spy then arrived and said, "O prince, this is the right time to trick the 'Arabs."

Yûqannâ : How is that?

Spy : They have gone to the Batnân Valley which has entered into a treaty with them and has agreed to supply them with fodder and provisions. I have now seen a Muslim party heading for the village with camels and mules. They are wearing only their shirts and carrying only their spears with them. They are few, not all that many.

27) The second raid

Yûqannâ selected 1,000 men and said, "Get ready. By Christ! I will make travel difficult for the 'Arabs and cut off their roads."

At nightfall he opened the gate for them. The spy led them until they reached the main road. They continued under the cover of night until they came across a cowherd returning his herd to the town. When they saw the cowherd who was travelling strenuously they rushed to him and said, "Did any 'Arabs cross your path?"

Cowherd : Yes. At sunset 100 horsemen came rushing past and had with them camels and mules. They were seeking provisions from those under their rule in this valley, but we do not fear them.

Commander : You have been kind enough to tell us about this valley's alliance which we did not know about. Now, in the name of Christ, tell us in which direction they went.

The cowherd pointed to the east and said, "That way."

The officer continued with his men, unaware that the cowherd was following them.

In the morning they saw the Muslims under the command of Munâwish. When Munâwish saw the enemy cavalry he called out, "O sons of 'Arabs, this is a Roman general. Beware of him and be firm in Jihâd. Practise patience under difficulty to attain Jannah."

The Muslims charged as did the Christians and an intense battle ensued. Thirty Muslims, all of them from the Tayy tribe, were martyred. These included Munâwish bin ad-Dahâk, al-Ghatrîf bin Thâbit, Manî' bin Thâbit, Manî' bin 'Âsim and Kuhlân bin Murrah.The rest fled leaving the enemy to seize the camels and booty.

The enemy commander said, "Take the load off some of the animals and cut their legs. Bring the rest with their loads because it will be provision for us. Head for the mountains and hide from the spies of the 'Arabs or else they will be here this very

moment with horses coming like a wind to defeat you. So hide until nightfall when we can return to the protection of the fort."

They killed the camels and took the mules. They hid in a village in the mountain for the rest of the day, waiting for the cover of night to return to the fort. A watchman was appointed.

'Awf bin Sabbâh at-Tâî narrates:

I was amongst the horsemen when my paternal uncle, Munâwish, was killed. We were few and were attacked by surprise. After weighing our small numbers against their great numbers and fierceness, we saved ourselves and went to the Muslim camp. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ rushed to us and asked, "What has happened?"

"War and death," we replied. "Munâwish and many others were killed. Our provisions and beasts were taken."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : What could have befallen you when Allâh has encircled the Romans and none can come out?

Muslims : We do not know except that we saw a great patrician come against us in good gear and with many horsemen prepared for battle. We do not know their numbers, nor where they came from. They attacked us during our journey. They killed our commander and others and took our beasts and provisions.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called Khâlid ﷺ and said, "O Abû Sulaymân, you are the man for this job. I place my reliance first upon Allâh, then upon you and I seek goodness from Allâh in all my affairs. Go with Allâh's blessings and take whoever you like from the Muslims. Go where the incident took place and follow their trail, perhaps Allâh will let us catch them. Seek them out wherever they may be and avenge the Muslims. Remember that the people of the valley have a treaty with us so we should not be the ones to break our word. However, if they have betrayed us then we will fight them, so fear Allâh with regards to their rights. Now go. May Allâh have mercy on you."

Khâlid ﷺ rushed to his tent and took his arms. He then mounted his horse, intending to leave alone. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called out,"Where are you going to, Abû Sulaymân?"

Khâlid ﷺ: To where you have ordered me to go.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Take any Muslims whom you would like to accompany you.

Khâlid : I am going alone. I do not want anyone with me.

Abû 'Ubaydah : How can you go alone when your enemies are so many?

Khâlid : Whether they are 1,000 or 2,000, I will challenge them with Allâh's help.

Abû 'Ubaydah : You are like that, but still, take some men with you.

28) Khâlid's revenge

Khâlid eventually agreed to take Dirâr and others like him. When they reached the battle site they saw the dead Muslims lying all around. They were surrounded by the people of the valley who were weeping out of fear that the Arabs would take them to account for the incident and take vengeance upon them and their children. So when the Muslims arrived they screamed and threw themselves in front of Khâlid.

Khâlid : Who killed our men?

Christians : We are innocent of the blood of your men. We are at peace with you.

Khâlid made them swear that they had no knowledge of who had killed them and they all swore.

Khâlid : Then who could have attacked them?

Man : A general whom Yûqannâ had sent with 1,000 of his fiercest warriors. They have spies in your army who inform them about you at all times.

Khâlid : Which road did they take?

Man : This road.

Khâlid : Did you not swear to me that you had no knowledge of them?

Christian : He who informs you is not of us. He is an Aleppan who had come to buy food. We had no information to give you.

Khâlid : So they took this road?

Aleppan man : Yes, I saw them heading for the mountains.

Khâlid then said to his men, "They realised that we would come after them so they must have gone from the road to hide until night-time and then return to their fort. Let us go after them."

Taking some Christian guides with them, the Muslims continued the pursuit. When they reached the road, Khâlid ﷺ asked one of the Christians, "Is there any other road which they can take back to the fort?"

"Yes," replied the Christian, "but they will still have to pass by here. If you stay here you will be successful, God-willing."

So they dismounted in the valley and hid, watching the road.

Not much of the night had passed when the sound of pounding hooves was heard. The patrician was at the head of his men, encouraging them. When half of them had passed by, Khâlid ﷺ shouted like a lion and led his men out against them. He thought that the patrician might be Yûqannâ himself, so he aimed for him and cut him into two pieces with a single blow. The Muslims hacked them down with their swords until none survived except those for whom Allâh had willed that their life-spans should be extended.

The Muslims gathered all the booty, spiked the patrician's head on a spear point and took it to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, whom they found to be eagerly awaiting them. As Khâlid ﷺ arrived with all the booty, prisoners and mules his men called out, "Lâ ilâha Illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" to which the Muslims in the camp responded in a like manner.

There were 700 decapitated heads while more than 300 prisoners were taken. They were offered Islâm, but refused and said, "We will pay ransom."

"We will strike your necks to terrorise Allâh's enemy," retorted Khâlid ﷺ who proved true to his word. He then said, "We thought that we had them tightly besieged, but that is not so. They merely wait until we are neglectful and then they come raiding. They killed our camels and mules, so it is only proper that we post tight security on every road so that we may pass through while they are trapped in the fort. We should make life as difficult as possible for them."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : May Allâh reward you well, Abû Sulaymân. What excellent insight you have.

After leading the Mulsims the next day in <u>S</u>alâtul Fajr, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called 'Abdura<u>h</u>mân bin Abî Bakr, <u>D</u>irâr ﷺ, Sa'îd bin Zayd bin 'Amr bin Nufayl, Qays bin Hubayrah and Maysarah bin Masrûq. He ordered each one to guard a separate spot with men of his own choice and to cut off all roads to Yûqannâ to the extent that if even a bird flew over they should cage it. They did this, but as time passed slowly,

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ became exasperated. He ordered the Muslims to withdraw so that they could return and attack once the enemy had lowered its guard.

29) The spy

The Muslims withdrew to a nearby village, an-Nîrâb, but Yûqannâ showed no sign of opening the gate and coming out. Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ became extremely worried and said to Khâlid ؓ, "O Abû Sulaymân, the spies of Allâh's enemy go and warn him. Go around the camp and investigate. Perhaps you will discover a spy."

Khâlid ؓ mounted his horse and ordered that any stranger should be caught. As he patrolled he came across a Christian 'Arab who carried a cloak and kissed it. When he saw Khâlid ؓ his blood curdled

Khâlid ؓ : From which nation are you?

Ghassânî : Yaman.

Khâlid ؓ : From which tribe?

The Ghassânî intended mentioning another tribe, but the truth slipped from his tongue, "I am of Ghassân."

Khâlid ؓ : O enemy of Allâh, you are the spy for our enemy!

Ghassânî : I am not a Christian. I am a Muslim.

Khâlid ؓ took him to Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ and said, "O commander, I doubt him. I have never seen him before today and he says that he is of Ghassân. He is certainly a cross-worshipper."

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : Test him.

Khâlid ؓ : With what?

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : With the Qurân and Salâh. If he cannot answer you then he is not a Muslim.

Khâlid ؓ : Right. Pray two rak'ât and recite loudly in both of them.

When the Ghassânî could not, Khâlid ؓ shouted, "O enemy of Allâh, you are a spy against us."

Upon further questioning he confessed that he was a spy.

Khâlid ☙ : Are you alone?

Ghassânî : No, I am one of three. The other two have gone to the fort to inform Yûqannâ about you. I stayed behind to see what you were doing.

Abû 'Ubaydah ☙ : What do you prefer, Islâm or death? You have no other option.

Ghassânî : I bear witness that there is no deity besides Allâh and that Muhammad is His Messenger.

30) 'Umar's ☙ complaint

Abû 'Ubaydah ☙ returned to Aleppo where the fort remained under siege for another four to five months. 'Umar ☙ had not received any information from him for a lengthy period of time so he wrote to him:

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

From : 'Umar, the slave of Allâh

To : His governor, Abû 'Ubaydah

Salâm 'alayka

I praise Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity and I convey salutations upon His Prophet, Muhammad.

O Abû 'Ubaydah! Know that because of you not sending any information my heart and my very body is undergoing difficulty, worrying about the Muslims. Day and night my heart is with you. When I neither receive any information nor any messenger from you, my mind wanders and my thoughts are confused. You write of neither conquest nor booty.

O Abû 'Ubaydah! Know that I may be physically absent from you, but my thoughts are constantly with you and I continuously make du'â for you. My anxiety for you is like an affectionate

mother's towards her baby. Please act as a helper of Islâm and the Muslims when you receive my letter.

Was-salâmu 'alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakâtuhu.

He then sent the letter.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ read out the letter to the Muslims and said, "O Muslims, when the Commander of the Believers is making du'â for you and is pleased with you then Allâh will help you." He then wrote the following reply:

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

To : The Commander of the Believers, Abû 'Abdillâh 'Umar bin al-Khattâb

From : His governor over Syria, Abû 'Ubaydah

Salâm 'alayka

I praise Allâh Most High and convey salutations upon His Prophet.

O Commander of the Believers! Allâh Most High to Whom all praise belongs conquered Qinsarîn at our hands after which we raided al-'Awâsim. Allâh then granted us Aleppo by treaty. However, the fort which holds many men under the prince, Yûqannâ, still defies us. He has tricked us several times.

(He then mentioned the whole incident of Yûhannâ.)

He killed many of our men whom Allâh blessed with martyrdom at his hands.

(He then mentioned the ambush massacre.)

We then intended to deceive him, but failed. I now intend lifting the siege and going to the land between Aleppo and Antioch. I await your reply.

He sent the letter with 'Abdullâh bin Qurt ﷺ and Ja'dah bin Jubayr ﷺ.

The two took the al-'Atîqah road and travelled hard until they had crossed the land of al-Jaffâr to Sakâsikah which is an 'Arab fort close to Tîmâ. A horseman was spotted who was wearing full armour and a glittering helmet. He held his spear as if he had either just come from combat or was about to engage in combat. When he saw them he came towards them.

Ibn Qurt ﷺ : Do you see this horseman coming towards us in this place and condition?

Ja'dah ﷺ : Why should we fear any 'Arab horseman when there is nobody in this region who lifts a spear or ties a bow except that he has entered under our rule and law?

The horseman appeared, made salâm, and asked, "Where are you two coming from and where are you going to?"

"We are messengers from the general, Abû 'Ubaydah, to the Commander of the Believers, 'Umar bin al-Khattâb - may Allâh be pleased with him," they replied, "and who are you?"

Horseman : I am Hilâl bin Badr at-Tâî.

Messengers : Why do we see you carrying weapons?

Hilâl : I have come with some of my people to wage Jihâd in Syria due to a letter we had received from 'Umar ﷺ. When I saw the two of you at the bottom of the valley I headed towards you. My people are coming behind me.

Hilâl then made salâm to them and departed. He saw his people's caravan of camels coming in a line until they met up with him. When he told them about the two Sahâbah they were pleased and continued towards Syria.

31) Yamanî reinforcements

Ibn Qurt ﷺ and Ja'dah ﷺ reached al-Madînah. They entered the Masjid, made salâm to 'Umar ﷺ and the Muslims and gave him the letter. Upon reading it he rejoiced and lifting his palms to the sky, saying, "O Allâh, save the people from the evil of every evil one."

He then ordered the herald to announce, "Congregational prayer!"

After they had gathered he read the letter out to them. The men of Hadramawt and the ends of Yaman such as Hamdân, Madân, Saba and Mârib then came to him, requesting that he send them to Syria.

'Umar ﷺ : How many are you? May Allâh bless you.

Yamanîs : We are 400 horsemen; 300 riding two per camel and many who have no mounts and have to walk Do you have mounts for us so that we may reach the enemy?

'Umar ﷺ : How many of you are walking?

Yamanîs : 140.

'Umar ﷺ : 'Arabs or slaves?

Yamanîs : 'Arabs and slaves whom their masters have permitted to travel and partake in Jihâd against the enemy.

'Umar ﷺ then called his son, 'Abdullâh ﷺ and said, "Get seventy camels given in charity for these people so that they may ride them and load their provisions upon them."

'Abdullâh ﷺ hastened to comply and gave them the seventy camels, saying, "Strive to reach your brothers and hasten to the enemy."

'Umar ﷺ then wrote to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ:

> *Your messengers have brought me your letter. I am happy at both the victories and the martyrdom which has been obtained. Your desire to withdraw to the land between Aleppo and Antioch away from the fort is not correct. If you leave such a man whose lands are close and whose city you rule then he will spread the news in all directions that you could not overcome him and then your reputation will weaken. His prestige will rise and enemies will entertain hopes against you. The armies of Rome will become bold against you – their elite and their commoners. Kings will send spies to him and correspond with each other against you. So beware of abandoning your struggle until either*

Allâh kills him, or if Allâh wills he surrenders or Allâh decides something else and He is the best decision maker.

Send horsemen to the soft-lands, the rough-lands, the spacious lands, the mountain-tops and valleys. Send raiding expeditions to the ends of the deserts.

Accept the surrender of whoever wishes to surrender. Grant safety to whoever requests it. Allâh is my Overseer over you and the Muslims.

I am sending this letter to you together with a group of men from Hadramawt and other places and the chiefs of Yaman who have dedicated their lives to the Path of Allâh. They are eager for Jihâd. They include both 'Arabs and slaves and both cavalry and infantry. If Allâh wills reinforcements will continuously be arriving.

Was-Salâm.

32) The black giant

The reinforcements travelled hard and at the same time enquiring from Ibn Qurt ﷺ and Ja'dah about Syria. They asked about the conquests and the killing of the Romans as well as where the Muslims were camped.

Ibn Qurt ﷺ : The Muslims and their general are besieging Aleppo's fort. There is a mighty Roman prince in it with many followers. They have fortified themselves therein.

Yamanîs : Why do they not surrender as those before them have done?

Ibn Qurt ﷺ : O 'Arabs, since al-Yarmûk we have not seen anyone braver than this man. He kills men and brings down great warriors. He attacks the ends of the camp at the time of Salâh, kills men and plunders wealth. Once he came under the cover of night to seize fodder. He took mules, provisions and food and then returned to the fort without our knowledge. The Muslims may be besieging him, but they fear him and are wary of him.

Amongst those who heard him was Dâmis, a slave of the royal Tarîf clan of the Kindah tribe. He was well known by both his name as well as nickname, Abû al-Hawl or Abû al-Ahwâl (Father of terror). He was pitch black and as tall as a palm trunk. When he mounted a tall horse his legs would drag on the ground. When mounted on a tall camel his knees would reach near the camel's legs. He was a great strong horseman whose fame had spread, whose list of deeds increased and who was highly esteemed in all the cities of Kindah, the valleys of Hadramawt, the mountains of Muhrah and the land of trees. He used to terrify the Bedouins and loot the wealth of the city-dwellers *(presumably this refers to the pre-Islâmic period - translator's note).* Fine horses were unable to race him. When the 'Arabs had eventually caught him in the courtyside they were astounded at his strength.

Hearing what Yûqannâ was doing to the Muslims he almost exploded with rage and said to Ibn Qurt, "Rejoice my 'Arab Brother! By Allâh! I will strive until Allâh defeats him at my hands."

Ibn Qurt ﷺ : O son of a black woman, you have deluded yourself with the impossible. Woe unto you! Do you not know that all the great Muslim warriors are besieging him and fighting his men, but none have none able to overcome his evil. He has tricked and triumphed over many kings.

Dâmis (angry) : By Allâh! O 'Abdullâh, were it not for the brotherhood of Islâm between us I would deal with you before I deal with him. Beware of looking down on men. If you would like to know about me then ask from those of my people who are present. Ask about those deeds of mine which leave the mind confused and narrow the heart. Ask how many armies I have destroyed, how many forces I have scattered, how many caravans I have decimated, how many raids I have conducted. No neighbour can harm me and no defect can reach me. Through the grace of Allâh I am an attacking horseman, not a fleeing one.

He then stormed off to the front of the expedition. A group of 'Arabs then said to Ibn Qurt ﷺ, "O brother 'Arab, have mercy on yourself. By Allâh! You have spoken to such a man who makes the impossible possible. He takes difficult tasks to be light. He is outstandingly strong and fears no man. Champion warriors do not scare him. In war he is at the forefront - his target cannot escape and none can beat him."

Ibn Qurt ﷺ : You are exaggerating, but I do hope that Allâh brings some good through him.

They increased their pace until they reached Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and the Muslims who were besieging the fort on all sides. When the newcomers saw the army, they took

out their decorations, unsheathed their swords and other weapons, unfurled their flags and shouted, "Allâhu Akbar!" simultaneously and recited salutations upon Rasûlullâh ﷺ. The army responded with shouts of, "Allâhu Akbar!" from every direction. Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ came out to welcome them. After salâm was exchanged each tribe went to join the camp of their fellow tribesmen in the army.

33) Dâmis's bravery

Yûqannâ had maintained a few light attacks against the Muslims at night, but never emerged during daylight. He stayed on the lookout for neglect amongst the Muslims. The new arrivals of Tay, Shanbas, Nabhân, Kindah and Hadramawt spent the night observing the heavy security being maintained.

Dâmis Abû al-Hawl went to his people of Tarîf and Kindah and said, "By Allâh! You are not fit to be called besiegers."

Kindah : Why is that?

Dâmis : The enemy is at the top of the fort while you are here at the bottom, on the ground with no enemy facing you. What do you fear?

Kindah : O Abû al-Hawl, the prince of this fort brings about evil fortune. He looks out for neglect on our part, attacks our camp's end and even comes to where we should be safe.

Suddenly screams were heard coming from the end of the camp. Dâmis unsheathed his sword and covered himself with his shield. He set out in the direction of the screams and found Yûqannâ attacking a group of Muslims with 500 great warriors, all of them fierce lions. Dâmis paused in the midst of the enemy and recited:

أنا أبو الهول واسمي دامس   أكر في جمعهم مداعس
ليث هزبر بطل ممارس   مدمر كل عدو ناكس

I am Dâmis the father of terror
They do I attack and knock over.
I am a lion, a champion, a veteran
I knock over every enemy man.

He and a group of Banû Tarîf launched an attack and Yûqannâ had to retreat. 200 of his men were killed but Dâmis continued attacking and chased them right up to the pathway of the fort. He was followed by the Kindah.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called out, "I forbid you from following them in the darkness of the night."

They said to Dâmis, "O Abû al-Hawl, the commander orders us to return, so return. May Allâh have mercy on you."

Dâmis and the Kindah returned after having put up an excellent fight and the Muslims rejoiced.

After the people had prayed Salâtul Fajr behind Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, everyone spread out except for a few generals who discussed the events of the previous night.

Khâlid ﷺ : May Allâh keep the commander in a good state. I saw the Kindah putting up a good performance. They advanced and remained steadfast. They continued striking until the enemy's violence was lifted from us.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : By Allâh! You have spoken the truth, Abû Sulaymân. The Kindah made the people happy with their firmness. I heard them saying, "Dâmis has done well. Abû al-Hawl has performed excellently."

Surâqah bin Mirdâs bin Yakrub, a chief of Kindah : May Allâh keep the commander in a good state. Dâmis and Abû al-Hawl are one and the same person. He is the slave of the Tarîf clan and is part of that group which arrived yesterday. He terrifies champions, humiliates brave ones and disgraces opponents. No force terrifies him and no attack is difficult for him.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Do you hear what Surâqah says about their slave, Dâmis?

Khâlid ﷺ : It may be true for I have heard about his bravery before. An-Nu'mân bin 'Ashîrah al-Muhrî told me that Dâmis single-handedly attacked a party of seventy of the Muhrah on the coast. He was hunting them down to take revenge on behalf of his people. They feared him, his evil and violence so much that they fled from him, taking their wealth and beasts with them to the bottom of the mountains at the coast. He continued looking for them until he discovered where they were. He then called his people to help him fight them, but not a single one of them came forward. He knew the land well - the plains, the rough terrain, the coast and the inland regions. When he despaired of his people's assistance he went to his secret lair and came out

carrying a bundle on his shoulders. His people said to him, "Where are you going to and what are you carrying?"

"O people," he replied, "I am going to attack Banû ash-Sha'r and take revenge against them. I will expose their shame."

The village-elders said, "We have never seen anything more strange. You know that there are seventy of them. How can one man go against all of them? We think that you are going to Jawwâd."

Jawwâd was a slave-girl of Banû Hayyâs of Hadramawt. She lived in Asfal, a village in Hadramawt. Dâmis was in love with her and whatever money, camels and horses he plundered he would give to her however great the amount might be. In fact he disliked giving her little. The village-elders now thought that the bundle was also for her. Dâmis said to them, "By Allâh! How can you say that about me when I am a great warrior? You will soon see that I am true to my word."

They left him and he went to his people's pasturage to take his mount from amongst the camels. He mounted, taking his shield and sword with him and placing the bundle under him. He travelled for the rest of the day and night. Towards the end of the night he reached a valley where he made his camel sit. He unloaded it, tied it and left it to graze. The enemy was nearby, so he hid behind two rocks in case they should stumble across him.

After another day had passed and the second night arrived he reloaded the camel and mounted it. He continued until he spotted some fires and headed towards them. He made his camel sit and tied its mouth to prevent the enemy from hearing it. The bundle contained sheets of cloth. He took them and tied each one onto a different branch of an Acacia tree in such a way that they resembled men's turbans. He then used rocks to erect forty of the branches and dressed each with loincloths and reddish-purple robes. He jumped from the high ground where he had done all this and went to the village.

He went around the houses, pondering over his plan. Most of the night had already passed. At dawn he went to the coast and shouted, "Your time is near. I am Abû al-Hawl. Morning has brought your destruction from land and sea. O Tarîf, revenge! O Kindah!"

When they heard this the men became alarmed and the women screamed. They fled to the mountain on the coast with Dâmis in hot pursuit. However, once they realised that he was all alone, they encouraged each other and turned to confront him, hoping

to overcome him. Dâmis attacked them, killing one man after the other. Seeing what great strength he had, some of them headed for the high ground in order to attack him from behind. He feared that they would get too close to the branches and discover his trick. He rushed to the branches and spoke to them as if he was speaking to real men, "O Kindah! O Tarîf, beware! They are coming, but do not attack them. I will sacrifice my life for you, but if I am injured you may come out and attack them."

The enemy looked at him and saw the cloth covered branches. In the dim light of dawn they really looked like men, so they withdrew to the sea. Dâmis then called out, "O my people, swear that you will not leave your stations. I suffice all of you against them."

Banû Muhrah fled. Some of them put their wives on the back of their mounts with them, others took their children, others their slave-girls and others what furniture they could manage. Dâmis returned to the village and found only children, slaves and old people. He ordered the slaves to load the camels. After they loaded the camels he shackled them and took them all with him. He removed the cloths off the branches and returned with the camels and slaves to his people who were absolutely astounded at his feat.

34) Dâmis's dream

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ then said to Surâqah, "Call your slave so that I can see and hear him."

When Surâqah brought him he asked, "Are you Dâmis?"

Dâmis : Yes, may Allâh keep the commander in a good state.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : I have heard amazing things about you and believe them to be possible coming from a great man like you. I know that you and your people fight in the plains, not in the mountains and forts, yet last night you people rushed dangerously after the enemy. Have mercy upon yourself and beware of this prince, Yûqannâ.

Dâmis : May Allâh keep the commander in a good state. I raided Muhrah and took their wealth although their mountain is towering high, formidable, rocky and rough.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : I see that you are of high rank. Do you have any thoughts with regards to this fort?

Dâmis : May Allâh keep the commander in a good state. I had a dream when I arrived here…

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : What did you dream? May Allâh show you only goodness.

Dâmis : I dreamed that I was in a flat land looking for my people. Suddenly I came across them. I found them to be confused, neither going forward, nor back. I asked them, "O my people, what keeps you like this on the road?"

"Do you not see the mountain at the end of the road?" they asked, "We cannot find any pathway or means to climb it."

"Be calm," I replied, "Do you not see that crack in the mountain?"

They said, "It is not possible for us to climb through."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because there is a giant python there. It kills whoever passes through. It has already killed many men and warriors," they replied.

"Then find a way behind it," I said.

They said, "We cannot do that due to its massive body."

So I left them and searched for a way, but only found a very difficult one. I plunged in and with great difficulty reached behind the python and killed it. I then returned to my people who followed me. They reached their destination with much hardship, but were safe from the enemy. I then awoke in a state of great happiness.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Good! O Dâmis, you saw good coming. Your dream is good news for the Muslims and bad news for the enemy. Now sit in your place.

He then summoned all the chiefs and said, "Allâhu Akbar! Allâh has conquered and helped us. He has gifted us victory and defeated those who disbelieve. O Muslims, listen to the dream of your brother Dâmis, for it is a lesson to all who heed and a warning to all who think."

When they came forward to listen Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ stood up and said, "All praise be to Allâh and salutations and peace be upon His Rasûl. O people, through the tongue of His Rasûl, Muhammad, Allâh Most High and Pure has promised us in His Book victory against our enemy and triumph in attaining our goals. Allâh will never break His promise. I have vowed that if Allâh grants me the conquest of this fort then

I will perform whatever good I am capable of. My heart tells me that if Allâh wills we will triumph over this fort and its inhabitants. There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty. This I feel is due to this slave's dream which points to victory."

He then grabbed Dâmis's forearm and said, "May Allâh have mercy on you. Tell your brothers what you dreamt."

Dâmis stood up and narrated the whole dream from beginning to end. The Muslims then said to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "O commander, we have heard and pondered over it but do not understand its meaning."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : May Allâh have mercy on you. Know that the high, lofty, impassable mountain between the mountain-passes and the fort is nothing other than the Dîn of Islâm and the Sunnah of Muhammad. The python which was blocking the people and which he then attacked and killed with his sword means that Allâh will grant relief to the Muslims through him.

Muslims (happy) : O commander, what do you order us to do?

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : I order you to fear Allâh in open and in secret. Keep working against the enemy, cheerfully and patiently. Now return to your camps, may Allâh protect you. Get yourselves, your equipment of war and whatever else you need ready because I am sending you first thing tomorrow morning to the enemy unless one of you have a differing view. I do not refrain from consulting such Muslims upon whose opinions I can rely.

Muslims : May Allâh guide your thoughts and grant you victory over your enemies. Verily he is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing, the One Who does as He pleases.

The chiefs returned to their tents. Some sharpened their swords, some prepared their equipment and horses, some inspected their armour, others inspected their bows and arrows. The rest of the day was spent in this way.

35) Dâmis's plan

In the morning Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ called Dâmis and said, "O blessed boy, do you have a strategy against the fort?"

Dâmis : O commander, it is a strong, high, impregnable fort which makes any attacker helpless. It withstands sieges and its people are not shy to fight. However, I

have thought of a strategy which if Allâh wills will lead to their destruction. Through Allâh's will we will own their homes and completely uproot them.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : O Dâmis, what is it?

Dâmis : May Allâh keep the Commander in a good state. You know the harm of spreading a secret. He who keeps his secret keeps his options open to him.

It is said that Dâmis was the first to say this and it became an idiom in 'Arabic.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : What do you advise and what do you need?

Dâmis : I want you to lead your men in an attack against them until you are directly facing them so that they may become terrified at you. In this lies a strategy which I hope that Allâh will make it succeed. There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good, except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ issued orders to go against the fort so the Muslims went beneath the fort walls, reciting, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" and brandished their weapons to terrify Allâh's enemy. When the Romans saw the great numbers coming against them they became scared and Allâh cast terror into their hearts. Their seniors began to consult each other. Some said, "We should fight them," while others said, "No, we should sit in the fort because they have no power against us."

They eventually decided upon attacking from the fort. They would fling arrows and stones from the top of the towers. They continued this day and night and Dâmis found that his plan was failing.

After forty-seven days Dâmis came to Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ and said, "O commander, I am helpless. Nothing is being achieved through my plan, but I now have a new plan through which I hope for victory against the enemies of Allâh."

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : What is your plan?

Dâmis : Give me thirty of your boldest men and order them to obey me and not to oppose me in what I order them to do.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : I will do that.

He then gathered thirty brave warriors and said to them, "O Muslims, I appoint Dâmis over you and order you to obey him. May Allâh have mercy on you. Know that I have not put him over you considering him to be better in worth and lineage or a greater and stronger warrior. So none of you should say that I have appointed a

lowly slave over you. By Allâh! Were it not for my duties in organising the army I would be the first to go with him in your group. I hope that Allâh will grant you victory."

The thirty : May Allâh keep the commander in a good state. We have no doubt that you honour us and know our record. Your first words were enough to affect us. We present ourselves to you and even if you were to appoint an uncircumcised disbeliever over us we would not disobey you in the least. We know you to be a well-wisher of the Dîn and a cautious man. So we hear and obey Allâh, then you, then whomsoever you appoint over us.

These words gladdened Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. He trusted them, thanked them and said, "May Allâh have mercy on you. My heart tells me that Allâh will conquer this fort through this slave because he has keen insight and knows strategy. Go and put your trust in Allâh. You know that Rasûlullâh ﷺ had appointed slaves over the chiefs of the Muslims and the noble ones of his family. O Dâmis, what else do you want?

Dâmis : Take the army immediately until you are at a distance of one Farsakh (5.5 km) from us. Halt and order the men to make as few movements as possible. They should hide themselves as much as they can. Appoint reliable spies whom you know to be well-wishers of the Muslims. They should keep an eye on us without contacting us. They should have no weapons other than daggers. Once they see us engaging the enemy they should go and inform you and then you can come join us. They should be at a single place, but also slightly spread out. In that way they will be safest and also capable of fulfilling their task. Allâh's help should be sought in all matters and conditions.

In this way Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ concluded that Dâmis was a sincere, far-sighted man. Dâmis then turned to his thirty men and said, "O 'Arab youth, may Allâh bless you. Hide in one of the valleys until the army finishes marching off because at that time the Romans will be looking out from the top of the fort and may spot us. Each man should take his sword, shield and dagger and nothing else."

Once they took what he had instructed them to take Dâmis put on his upper-body armour and put his dagger under his robe. He took his men out of the camp, all the while hiding their trail. When they reached a cave at the mountain he ordered them to enter while he sat at the entrance.

36) Dâmis's prisoners

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ organised his troops and left as Dâmis had advised. The enemy watched them. They rejoiced and jeered at the Muslims. They went and told Yûqannâ, "O Sir, open the gates so that we can kill and capture the 'Arabs."

He forbade them and so they remained inside until evening.

In the meantime Dâmis said to his men, "Who will go beneath the fort to get information? He must capture one of them and bring him to us so that we can question him."

When none answered he said, "I see that all of you are miserly with your lives and hate death. I will be the sacrifice for you all. Stay and watch my stealth."

He left them and within a short while returned with a Christian and said, "O 'Arab youth, question him."

They questioned him, but could not understand his language.

Dâmis said, "Do not worry" and left to return with three others but none understood 'Arabic.

Dâmis exclaimed, "May Allâh curse them. How horrible their language is and how horrible is their pronounciation."

He then tied them up and disappeared until half the night had elapsed. His men became extremely worried and said to each other, "Dâmis has been outwitted. He is either dead or captured."

They kept on speaking about him. They decided to return to the army when Dâmis suddenly appeared, dragging a Roman behind him. The Muslims jumped at him, kissed him between the eyes and asked him as to his delay. They said, "O Dâmis, our hearts feared the worst and your delay was most difficult upon us."

Dâmis : May Allâh Most High have mercy upon you. Know that when I separated from you I went near to the fort walls and hid from them. They kept passing by me, babbling in their language. I ignored them all because I wanted someone who could speak 'Arabic. I had given up hope and intended to return in defeat when I heard a massive crash coming from the top of the fort. I went to investigate and found this man who had thrown himself from the fort to the bottom of the wall. I rushed to him and grabbed him. I brought him here, so interrogate him.

They spoke to him, but he only spoke Greek. They saw that his forehead was open with wounds. Dâmis then said, "He must have a story behind him. I think that he was fleeing from them, but none of you understands what he says. However, do not worry. I will soon get someone who understands both his language and 'Arabic."

He rushed off and in a short while returned pulling a man by his turban which he had tied around his neck. They asked him, "Are you from the city or the fort?"

(He was from the fort. In 'Arabic rhetoric hathf *is the omission of text implied by the following text - translator's note)*

Dâmis : Are you a Roman or a Christian 'Arab?

Prisoner : Christian 'Arab.

Muslims : Can you tell us of any weak points of the fort?

Prisoner : I do not know of any defects or of any way into the fort. Even if I knew, then by Christ, how can my religion permit me to tell you?

Dâmis (angry) : Ask these four prisoners if any of them are of the city for then they will fall under our treaty.

After questioning them he said, "None of them are of the city. They are all from the fort. I recognise them all."

Dâmis : Now ask this other man why he threw himself from the wall.

He questioned him and said, "He says - Prince Yûqannâ is angry with the Aleppans for making peace with you and sent threatening messages to them. When the 'Arabs withdrew he came down and gathered all the chiefs, including myself, and took us to the fort. There he demanded such sums of money that we could not afford. When I saw what was happening I threw myself down from the fort to save myself from his punishment. Before I knew it, you caught me. I am from the city. If you are 'Arabs then I am under your rule and protection. Do not violate your word by betraying me. If you are not 'Arabs then claim whatever ransom you want because I have just escaped a great torture."

Dâmis : Tell him that we are 'Arabs and will not harm him. He should not fear.

Dâmis wanted to show him how he treated enemies, so he beheaded all the Romans and the Christian 'Arab. He spared the Aleppan and set him free. He then took out of his pack a parcel wrapped in goat's skin. He unwrapped it to reveal dried bread. After putting the skin on his back, he said, "In the name of Allâh. Seek His help and rely upon Him. You will hide yourselves and be resolute for I am determined to conquer this fort if Allâh wills."

"Go with Allâh's blessings," they replied and hastily stood up.

Dâmis led them and sent two men to report to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ and to say to him, "Despatch the cavalry at dawn."

37) The Muslims enter the fort

The two left while Dâmis led the rest under the cover of darkness. He was crawling on all fours with the goat-skin on his back. Whenever he sensed anything coming he would gnaw on the dry bread as if he was a dog gnawing on a bone. His men would wait behind him, hiding behind rocks. They continued like this until they reached the fort walls and could hear the voices of the watchmen. Men were shouting from the top of the fort and security was tight.

Dâmis continued roaming around the wall until he reached a quiet spot and found the security to be sleeping. No other enemies were close by. He then said to his men, "You can see how high and well-defended this fort is. There is no tactic to overcome the tight security and the enemy's alertness. Do any of you know of a way in which we can climb up and reach the centre?"

The men replied, "O Dâmis, the commander appointed you over us. You know better than us and are braver than us. We are completely in your hands. We will not tarry in whatever you feel benefits the Muslims. By Allâh! Our deaths and the departing of our souls are easier upon us than to return without accomplishing anything. So order us and we will hear and obey. None will delay in following you. We will not die except beneath the shadow of swords, obeying Allâh and helping the Dîn of Islâm."

Dâmis said, "May Allâh accept your virtues. May He help you against your enemies. If that is your intention, then stick closely together as we advance upon this place."

They were twenty-eight men at that moment, two having gone to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ.

Dâmis : Is there anyone amongst you who can climb up the fort?

The twenty-eight : O Abû al-Hawl, who can climb without a ladder?

Dâmis : Do not worry.

He then chose seven such savage lions from amongst them who would be able to carry the entire tower without difficulty. He squatted and said to one of the seven, "Sit on my shoulders. Firmly grab the wall and sit as I am sitting." He thus ordered them one after the other to do this until the last one had reached the top. He ordered the top one to stand up straight and firmly grab the wall. They all did this, one after

the other, until eventually Dâmis himself stood up. At that point the top man could reach the top of the wall. He grabbed and hung onto it. He jumped up and saw the watchman sleeping, intoxicated with wine. He grabbed the watchman's arms and legs and threw him down. When the watchman reached the ground the Muslims stabbed him and hid the corpse.

The top man found another two senseless guards. He slit their throats and flung them down. Then unwinding his turban he extended it down to his companions. One of them to whom Dâmis had given a rope now climbed up and extended the rope. The rest climbed up and reached the top of the wall, the last being Dâmis.

Dâmis said, "Wait here while I go and explore."

He reached the prince's quarters in the centre of the fort and found him sitting, surrounded by his officers. Yûqannâ was sitting on brocade carpets, wearing a costume of pearls woven with gold. On his head was a jewelled head-band. They had pitchers of wine in front of them and frankincense and musk wafted in the air.

Dâmis returned to his men and said, "They are many and should we attack them we would have no guarantee of coming back safely. We shall wait until dawn. We will then attack Yûqannâ and his officers with our swords. If we overcome them and Allâh lowers them for us, then that is what we want. Otherwise, morning is quite close and there is no doubt that the two messengers must have reached Khâlid bin al-Walîd ﷺ and that he will come to us at that time."

Muslims : We do not oppose you in any way. We have already entered the enemy's fort and now nothing will save us except the truth of our Jihâd coupled with resolution and strength.

38) The fort is captured

The fort had two gates with a corridor in between them. Gatekeepers were stationed at the inside while men took turns to sleep there. Dâmis reached one closed gate and found all the guards sleeping in a state of drunkenness. He soon remedied their state by slitting their throats. He opened both gates and left them swinging.

By the time he returned to his men it was already close to dawn. "Good news!" he announced, "I opened both gates and killed those around them. So seize the gates before the enemy returns there. The enemy is still waiting to be harvested by Muslim swords."

He then sent one man to Khâlid ﷺ and five to seize the gates while he took the rest with him to Yûqannâ's quarters. They raised a shout which penetrated throughout the fort and then all turned round and went to the gate, each guarding his own post.

The appearance of the Muslims made the Romans scream, "O no, how did this trick succeed against us?"

Yûqannâ called out to his men who came to him from all directions. The Muslims shouted, "Allâhu Akbar!" in a single voice which made the Romans think that the fort was filled with them.

Ibn 'Aws narrates:

The Romans fought fiercely while the Muslims fought like savage lions. I did not see anyone that day who surpassed Dâmis in his attacks. After the battle we counted seventy-three wounds on his body, all of them on the front. At the height of the battle we were twenty-three defending each other. Four were killed: 'Aws bin 'Âmir al-Hazmî of Banû al-Hazm, Abû Hâmid bin Surâqah al-Himyarî, al-Fâri' bin Musayyib at-Tamîmî and Fazârah bin Murâd al-'Awfî.

Nawfal bin Sâlim narrates from his grandfather, Ghuwaylim bin Hazim, who was amongst those who accompanied Dâmis into the fort:

Some of us were killed and then the following were also killed: Mulâ'ib bin Miqdâm al-Hadramî ﷺ who was amongst those who were with Rasûlullâh ﷺ at Hudaybîyah and Tabûk; Murârah bin Rabî'ah al-'Âmirî; and Hilâl bin Umayyah the nephew of Ka'b bin Mâlik ﷺ who had not joined Tabûk and then had verses of the Qurân revealed in his regard. Only twenty of us remained and the Romans ganged up against us. They were more than 500, a veritable wall of iron. We had just given up on life when Khâlid ﷺ and his army arrived and found us engaged in intense combat. When they entered Khâlid ﷺ shouted and the Romans turned away from us.

When we saw that our difficulty had been relieved we raised shouts of "Allâhu Akbar! Allâhu Akbar!" and men like Dirâr ﷺ came and started striking the enemy necks. When the Romans realised that they could not overcome the Muslims they laid down their arms and begged for indemnity in Greek. The Muslims therefore also ceased fighting.

39) Yûqannâ's conversion

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ then arrived with the rest of the army and they told him, "The Romans request indemnity. The Muslims have refrained from killing them until you give your decision."

"They have already stopped," he replied and ordered all the men and women to be brought before him. When he presented them with Islâm the first to accept was Yûqannâ and a group of his officers. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ therefore returned their wealth and property to them. He forgave the peasants and spared them from execution or imprisonment. He extracted their promises to live as subjects of the Muslims and to pay Jizyah and then expelled them from the fort.

The Muslims then took out such quantities of gold and vessels which could not be counted. Abû 'Ubaydah took out the state's one-fifth share and divided the rest amongst the Muslims. The people began to speak of Dâmis's plan and amazing feats. They tended to his wounds until he recovered. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ granted him a double share of the booty and then gathered all the seniors and elders of the Muslims to consult them, "Allâh to Whom belongs all praise has conquered this fort at the hands of the Muslims and there now remains no such place which we fear. Will we now attack Antioch which is the Imperial headquarters where all the princes stay with Heraclius. What do you feel?"

40) Yûqannâ's dream

Yûqannâ then got up and spoke in fluent 'Arabic, "O commander, Allah, most Blessed and High, has helped you people and granted you victory over your enemy. This is only because your religion is the correct Dîn and the Straight Path and your Prophet is he who is mentioned in the Bible. He is without doubt the one about whom Christ had prophesied. He is the one who separates Truth from falsehood. He is the noble orphan Prophet whose parents had died and so his grandfather and uncle fostered him. Is this not so?"

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Yes, he is our Prophet ﷺ, but, Yûqannâ, your words puzzle me. Only yesterday you were fighting us, intending to break our army and cut off our fodder and today you speak such words. I had heard that you do not know a word of 'Arabic, so how did you memorise that speech?

Yûqannâ : There is no deity besides Allâh and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh. O commander, this affair amazes you?

Abû 'Ubaydah : Yes.

Yûqannâ : O commander, know that last night I was worrying about you. You had reached our fort and conquered our city whereas we had considered you to be the weakest of all nations. I fell asleep with these thoughts on my mind. I then saw in my dreams a man more handsome than the moon. His scent was sweeter than strong musk and he was accompanied by some people. When I asked them about him they replied, "This is Muhammad ﷺ, the Messenger of Allâh"

I said, "If he really is a prophet then let him ask his Lord to teach me 'Arabic."

He then pointed at me and said, "O Yûqannâ, I am Muhammad about whom the Messiah had prophesied. I am the Prophet after whom there will be no other prophet. If you wish then declare that there is no deity besides Allâh and that I, Muhammad, am the Messenger of Allâh."

I took his hands, kissed them and embraced Islâm*. I then awoke with my mouth smelling like strong musk and able to speak 'Arabic. I then went to the apartment of my brother, Yûhannâ, and opened his stock of books. In one book I found a description of Muhammad and his story. Every detail matched and it was also stated that the creation which hates him the most are the Jews. Is this true?

**(Then why did Yûqannâ rally his men against Dâmis? It is possible that the narrator meant an officer of Yûqannâ and not the prince himself - and Allâh knows best - translator's note.)*

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Yes, the Jews were most intense against us until Allâh granted us victory against them. We captured their forts and killed their warriors.

41) Yûqannâ's questions

Yûqannâ : Amongst the descriptions that I read was that Allâh had instructed the Prophet with regard to his Companions, the Muslims, the orphans and the poor. Is this true?

Abû 'Ubaydah : Yes, Allâh instructed him with regard to his Companions,

وَٱخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

And lower your wings of mercy to the Believers. [15:88]

As for orphans and poor, He says,

وَوَجَدَكَ ضَآلاًّ فَهَدَىٰ وَوَجَدَكَ عَآئِلاً فَأَغْنَىٰ

فَأَمَّا ٱلْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ

And Allâh found you to be d̲âll so He guided you. He found you poor and so He enriched you. So do not be angry with the orphan. Do not drive the beggar away. [93:6-9]

Yûqannâ : Why does Allâh say,

وَوَجَدَكَ ضَآلاًّ فَهَدَىٰ

And Allâh found you to be d̲âll and so He guided you.

"D̲âll" means astray and he is in fact very noble in the Eyes of Allâh?

Mu'ât̲h̲ bin Jabal : Here it means "wandering" to get to Our Company, so we guided you to it and made it easy for you to reach the Road of Manifestation. We made you stand in the place of gaining Vision. We found you "lost" in the sea of searching, sailing the ship of destruction so We guided you to the coast of Truth and brought you into the shadow of Realities. This is so that your heart will dis-incline from those other than Us and away from confusion in the abyss of your own desires and to draw you to desiring the moment of Meeting and Reception. You had no direct knowledge from Us or other information handed down to you. We revealed to you how to gain Our pleasure and showed you the reality of Our decree.

O Yûqannâ, do you not know that nothing is more fulfilling to a Believer than knowledge, nothing is more profitable than tolerance, nothing is more valuable than Dîn, no friend is more beautiful than intelligence, no companion is more evil than ignorance, nothing is more esteemed than piety, nothing is more satisfying than leaving base desires, no deed is better than pondering, no good is higher than patience, no evil is worse than pride, no medicine is nicer than leniency, no disease is more painful than stupidity, no messenger is more just than the truth, no guide is a better advisor than honesty, no poverty is more low than greed, no wealth is more ill-

fortuned than hoarding, no life is superior then good health, no lifestyle is more enjoyable than chastity, no worship is higher than humility, no ascetism is preferable to contentment, no guard is more protecting than silence and no absent thing is closer than death.

Yûqannâ : Lâ ilâha illallâh! That is what I read in the books of my brother, Yûhannâ. These things are also mentioned in the Gospel and Torah.

He then fell into prostration, kissed the ground out of thanks and said, "All praise be to Allâh Who guided me to this Dîn. By Allâh! He has anchored this Dîn in my heart and I know it to be the Truth. I will now fight for Allâh's sake just as I used to fight in obedience to the Devil. By Allâh! I will help this Dîn until I join my brother, Yûhannâ."

He then wept bitterly at what he had done to his brother.

Abû 'Ubaydah : Allâh says with regard to the brothers of Yûsuf,

لَا تَثْرِيبَ عَلَيْكُمُ ٱلْيَوْمَ يَغْفِرُ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ ٱلرَّٰحِمِينَ

There is no blame on you today. May Allâh forgive you. He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy. [12:92]

Your brother is in the highest stages of Jannah with the virgin damsels. As for you - the moment you embraced Islâm you became free of all sins just as the day your mother gave birth to you.

Yûqannâ continued weeping and said, "I make the Muslims my witnesses that every Jihâd I wage and every time I kill a disbeliever it should be recorded in my brother's register of deeds. It is compulsory upon me to fight in the Path of Allâh until I erase my past misdeeds."

42) The next destination

Abû 'Ubaydah : O slave of Allâh [Abdullah],* tell us where we should go now.

**(It is not specified if Yûqannâ took the name of 'Abdullâh or if he was merely being called 'slave of Allâh' out of respect - translator's note)*

Yûqannâ : O commander, the fort of 'Azâz is strong and impregnable. It is heavily manned and has ample food and equipment. My paternal cousin, Darius son of Jûfannâs, rules it. He is a strong, great warrior who is skilled in both spear and sword. If you leave him alone and head for Antioch he will raid Aleppo and Qinsarîn and spread his evil.

Abû 'Ubaydah : O slave of Allâh, Allâh has spoken the truth through your tongue. Do you have any strategy to propose?

Yûqannâ : Yes, I will mount my horse accompanied by 100 Muslim horsemen which you can give me. We will disguise ourselves as Romans and I will lead them. An 'Arab general will then follow us with light steeds. My 100 men will keep ahead of them a distance of one Farsakh (5.5 km) as if we are fleeing from you and the 1,000 are in pursuit of us. When we reach 'Azâz we will shout out. No doubt its master, Darius, will come out to meet us. If he questions me I will say that I was forced to become a Muslim and then fled with the 'Arabs in pursuit of me. Once he hears that he will take us into the fort. At that moment the 1,000 should be waiting at a nearby village. Once half the night has passed we will go to the centre of the fort and attack our enemies. By the time of Salâtul Fajr the 1,000 should come to our aid.

Abû 'Ubaydah's ﷺ face lit up and he asked Khâlid ﷺ and Mu'âth ﷺ about the plan. They said, "O Trusted One of the Ummah, it is a good plan if this man does not betray us and return to his old religion."

Abû 'Ubaydah :

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِٱلْمِرْصَادِ

Verily your Rabb is awaiting in ambush. [89:14]

Yûqannâ : By Allâh! I have completely left my religion for your Dîn after I used to venerate icons and crosses. Now nothing remains in my heart except love for Allâh, Muhammad ﷺ the chief of the descendants of 'Adnân and Jihâd on behalf of the best of all faiths. Allâh is witness to what I say. My words are as true as "There is no deity besides Allâh," and as true as "Muhammad is His Slave and Mesenger" (whom I had seen in my dream). If you suspect me to be the opposite of what I claim then do not let me do this.

Abû 'Ubaydah : O slave of Allâh, if you wish the Muslims well and will not betray them then Allâh will help every endeavour which is for His sake. So follow honesty

and you will attain success, for our Dîn is based on honesty. Follow the ways of your believing brothers. A truthful Believer is content with whatever little food he gets, is content with clothing which is enough to cover his private parts and is content with whatever his home is. So you should not be saddened at the loss of your rule because He Whom you seek is Eternal. The luxuries of this world are finite while the Hereafter is best and eternal. Today you are free from polytheism and bear in mind that that the world is a prison for the Believer and a paradise for the Disbeliever. The Believer has conviction that the grave is his bed, solitude is his gathering, taking lesson is his thoughts, the Qurân is his speech, the Rabb is his friend, remembrance of Allâh is his companion, ascetism is his associate, grief is mark, modesty is his badge, hunger is his gravy, wisdom is his conversation, the ground is his carpet, piety is his provision, silence is his booty, patience is his reliance, trusting Allâh is sufficient for him, intelligence is his guide, worship is his occupation and Paradise is his abode. O Yûqannâ, the Messiah has said, "I am amazed at he who spends his night without thinking of Allâh whereas He remembers him, at the hankerer of the world whereas death hankers after him, at the builder of palaces whereas the grave is his home."

Our Prophet ﷺ has said, "There are four such things that if they are given to someone he is given another four things."

The Book of Allâh explains what these things are.

> Whoever is given the blessing of remembering Allâh is in turn remembered by Allâh, for He says,
>
> فَاذْكُرُونِيٓ أَذْكُرْكُمْ
>
> *Remember Me and I will remember you. [2:152]*
>
> Whoever is granted the ability to make du'â is granted acceptance, for Allâh Most High says,
>
> ٱدْعُونِيٓ أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ
>
> *Call unto Me and I will respond. [40:60]*
>
> Whoever is granted gratitude is given an increase in that bounty for

which he is grateful for. Allâh Most High says,

لَئِن شَكَرۡتُمۡ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمۡ

If you are grateful unto me I will grant you an increase. [14:7]

Finally, whoever is granted guidance to repent is forgiven. Allâh Most High says,

ٱسۡتَغۡفِرُواْ رَبَّكُمۡ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ غَفَّارًا

Repent unto your Rabb for he is Most Forgiving. [71:10]

'Âmir bin Qubaysah al-Yashkurî narrates from Yûnus bin 'Abdil A'lâ to whom it was read out that Shahr bin Hawshab narrated from his grandfather, 'Âmir bin Zayd:

I participated with Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ in the conquests of Qinsarîn and Aleppo and spent a lot of time with those Romans who entered our Dîn. I did not see any among them more hardworking, more sincere in his belief, more ambitious in his intentions, more striving in Jihâd and more vigorous in battle against the Romans than Yûqannâ. By Allâh! He was well-meaning towards the Muslims, waged Jihâd against the Disbelievers and pleased the Rabb of the Worlds. He achieved such feats against the Romans which no-one else of his nationality could do and this was after the Muslims had suffered much at his hands at the Aleppo fort. He had not allowed the Muslims to sleep. He had not spared them day or night and many suffered martyrdom due to him - may Allâh be pleased with them all.

Part 5

Antioch

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Part 5

Antioch

1) The Azâz expedition

After Abû Ubaydah ﷺ had finished advising Yûqannâ, he gave him 100 cavalry, all disguised as Romans. They were ten each from ten tribes viz: Tay, Fihr, Khuzâ'ah, Shanîs, Nimyar, Hadramawt, Himyar, Bâhilah, Tamîm and Murâd. Each group had its own leader: Khaz'al bin al-'Âsim over Tay; Fihr bin Muzahim over Fihr; Sâlim bin 'Âdî over Khuzâ'ah; Masrûq bin Sinân over Shanîs; Asad bin Hâzin over Nimyar; Mâjid bin 'Umayrah over Hadramawt; Thul Kalâ' al-Himyarî, the king of the Himyar over his tribe; Sayf bin Qâdih over Bâhilah; Sa'd bin Hasan over Tamîm; and Mâlik bin Fayyâd over Murâd.

When their ranks were completed Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ said, "May Allâh have mercy on you. I am sending you with this man who has gifted his life to Allâh and His Rasûl ﷺ. Each group will have its own sub-commander. I have appointed him over you, so listen and obey him for as long as Allah pleases."

They dressed, mounted and left with Yûqannâ. Once they were at a distance of one Farsakh (5.5 km) Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ sent 1,000 horsemen after them under the command of Mâlik bin al-Ashtar an-Nakh'î. He said to Mâlik, "Go behind them and see what transpires with this pious slave. When you get close to the fort hide until just before dawn and then go to the aid of your brothers. Go, may Allâh guide you."

Mâlik ﷺ then led his troops and journeyed for the rest of the day. At night they hid in an uninhabited village, close to the fort. As for Yûqannâ, he headed for the fort on a different road.

Sulaymân bin 'Abdillâh al-Yashkurî narrates from ash-Shadîd bin Mâzin who narrates from his grandfather, Khaz'al bin 'Âsim:

I was amongst the horsemen Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had despatched with Yûqannâ. When we saw 'Azâz, Yûqannâ said to us, "O 'Arab youth, we have reached the enemy, so

do not speak because your language will reveal you to the Romans. I will translate for you. Be alert. When you see me attacking the master of the fort attack in the name of Allâh Most High."

They then went on ahead, Yûqannâ not knowing what had been destined for him.

Sulaymân bin 'Abdillâh al-Yashkurî narrates from 'Abdurahmân al-Mâzinî (who is one of those who wrote on the conquest of Syria) who narrates from al-Akwa' bin 'Abbâd al-Mâzinî:

I was with Mâlik al-Ashtar ﷺ amongst the 1,000 following Yûqannâ. When we reached the village we stayed there, awaiting morning. Suddenly we saw an army coming from the western side of the village. Mâlik ﷺ left us and returned in a short while with a Christian 'Arab prisoner and said to us, "O youth, listen to what he says."

Muslims : What does he say?

Mâlik ﷺ : Question him, he will answer you.

Muslims : From which people are you?

Târiq : From Ghassân, Jabalah bin al-Ayham's tribe.

Muslims : What is your name?

Târiq : Târiq bin Shaybân.

Mâlik ﷺ : O Târiq, in the name of 'Arab mutual responsibility do not hide anything from us which you know about our enemy.

Târiq : By God! I will not hide anything I know. Protect yourselves before your enemy arrives.

Mâlik ﷺ : How is that?

Târiq : Last night our spy, 'Ismah bin 'Afrajah, came to us from you. He had heard Yûqannâ's entire plot against the master of 'Azâz. He wrote it out on a piece of cloth which he folded and tied to a bird and sent to 'Azâz. When the governor read it he sent me to the governor of ar-Râwindât, Luke son of Shâs, requesting reinforcements against you. I took the message to him and he is now practically here with 500 cavalry, so get ready.

2) Yûqannâ is captured

As for Yûqannâ, he reached the fort to find the enemy prepared and waiting outside. The accursed Darius had with him 3,000 Roman cavalry, 1,000 Christian 'Arab cavalry and the refugees from the countryside. When Yûqannâ came, he did not let him suspect anything. He came walking to welcome him and pretended to kiss his bridle. Then using an extremely sharp knife which he had been hiding in his hand he cut Yûqannâ's horse's band and pulled him down. When Yûqannâ fell down on his head he released the 4,000 cavalry against the Sahâbah ﷺ, giving them no respite. They were all captured and tied up.

Darius spat in Yûqannâ's face and said, "Christ and the Cross became angry at you when you deserted your religion and entered the religion of your enemies. By Christ! After I behead all the 'Arabs I will definitely send you to merciful Caesar to crucify you at the gate of Antioch."

He then took them all into the fort.

It was purely Allâh's favour to the Muslims that the spy did not write to Darius about Mâlik al-Ashtar ﷺ. Mâlik ﷺ alerted his men and tied up the Christian. They then waited in ambush for the arrival of the governor of ar-Râwindât. When much of the night had passed they heard the pounding of hooves. Mâlik said nothing. When the enemy reached the middle of the ambush point they sprang at them, two Muslims grabbing one Christian. Not a single one escaped. The Muslims dressed in their clothes and raised their cross in front of them.

Mâlik ﷺ turned to Târiq and said, "Will you accept the Dîn of Allâh and His Prophet Muhammad? Belief will wipe out your past disbelief and you will be our brother."

Târiq : My heart is already with you. May Allâh not deal well with that man who took us away from Islâm. I am of that group who embraced Islâm with Jabalah at the hands of 'Umar. We have heard that Muhammad had said, "Kill him who changes his religion."

Mâlik ﷺ : You have spoken the truth, but that is cancelled by reciting, "Lâ ilâha illallâh," because Allah says,

إِلَّا مَن تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَٰلِحًا فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ ٱللَّهُ

سَيِّـَٔاتِهِمْ حَسَنَٰتٍ

...Except those who repent and perform righteous deeds. Those people will have Allâh change their evil into good. [25:70]

Rasûlullâh ﷺ accepted the repentance of Wahshî, the killer of his uncle, Hamzah ؓ, then Allâh revealed certain verses.

Târiq (happy) : Then I bear witness that there is no deity but Allâh and that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger. O Mâlik, my broken heart has been healed. May Allâh take you by the hand and save you on the day of Judgement.

Mâlik ؓ (rejoicing) : May Allâh guide you and keep your faith firm. O slave of Allâh, I wish you to do something that will make up for your past.

Târiq: What do you wish?

Mâlik ؓ : Go and tell Darius of Luke's coming.

Tariq : I will do that if Allâh Most High wills. If you are suspicious about me then send with me someone you rely upon to hear what I say. Half the night has already passed so security is heavy and the gates are locked. I will therefore have to shout from the edge of the ditch.

3) Darius's son embraces Islam

Mâlik sent his paternal cousin, Râshid bin Muqbis, with him and ordered him to remain alert. They left for the fort and found it to be heavily guarded. The Romans were striking their gongs and were raising a commotion at the centre of the fort. Târiq then said to Râshid, "This is certainly a battle."

They both kept silent and found it to be as Târiq had said.

The cause of the battle was that Darius's son, Lâwân, who was a brave youth, had been sent by his father with presents for Yûqannâ due to their common relationship. He had remained with Yûqannâ for several months, living in opulent quarters. On Good Friday he entered the cathedral which is today the Jâmi' Masjid and saw

Yûqannâ's daughter who was surrounded by her slave-girls, attendants and splendour. He fell in love with her but kept his passion secret.

He returned to 'Azâz where he complained to his mother about being in love with Yûqannâ's daughter. She loved him deeply because he was Darius's only son* and said, "I will speak to your father about this and tell him to send a proposal for her to her father. Yûqannâ will give her to you in marriage and give you whatever wealth you desire."

**(Darius definitely had other sons. Perhaps what is meant here is that Lâwân is his only son from her - translator's note)*

All the while Lâwân remained hopelessly in love with her. It was at that time that they had to pay attention to the 'Arab invasion.

When Darius captured Yûqannâ and the 100 Muslims, he imprisoned them in his son's quarters and ordered him to guard them. Lâwân thought, "By my faith! Our cousin, Yûqannâ has more religious knowledge than my father. If he did not accept that the 'Arabs are on the truth he would never have followed them after fighting them so fiercely. Also, Caesar's armies could never match them, God helped them despite them being so weak. My heart is still attached to his daughter. I will go and untie the Muslims and enter their religion after my cousin promises to give me his daughter in marriage. He is certainly on the Truth and I will get what I want and marry her."

He then went to Yûqannâ, sat before him and said, "O uncle, I have decided to set you and your men free. I prefer you to my father, my family and my realm. You know that to leave one's family is very hard, but I choose faith over disbelief because I know their religion to be correct. However, I stipulate that you marry your daughter to me; the dowry I offer is that I will free you and your men."

Yûqannâ : O son, there is no way that you will marry my daughter if your conversion is for worldly reasons. If however you are sincere then Allâh will reward you and will grant you your request. You will attain honour in this world and the next.

Lâwân : I sincerely testify that there is no deity except Allâh and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh.

He then untied the Muslims, gave them weapons and said to them, "Be ready. I am going to my father who is drunk with wine. I will kill him and then you can attack with Allâh's blessings and for His pleasure."

Yûqannâ then said to his 100 men, "Be witness that I give my daughter to him in marriage and his freeing us is the dowry."

4) Conquest of 'Azâz

Lâwân went to his father to find him already beheaded and surrounded by his brothers.

(One text mentions 'sisters' but this is refuted in section 6 - translator's note)

Lâwân : Who did this to my father?

Brothers : We.

Lâwân : Why?

Brothers : We did it for Allâh's pleasure. We heard what you said to Yûqannâ and his men and feared that your plan would not succeed and then they would join forces against your men. Our father would find out and kill you. We therefore attacked him before you.

Lâwân was happy at this and returned to inform the Muslims. They started celebrating from his quarters all the way as they moved to the fort's centre. They raised their voiced with, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" and recited salutations upon Rasûlullâh ﷺ. They slew any Romans they encountered on the way. The noise continued in this manner and the Romans rushed to combat the Muslims. It was at that moment that Târiq and his companion arrived.

Târiq narrates:

We heard a clamour and therefore returned to Mâlik رضي الله عنه to inform him of what we had heard. Mâlik رضي الله عنه then commanded his men, "Mount your horses to go to your companions."

They all mounted except for 100 who remained behind to guard the prisoners.

As the Muslims neared 'Azâz, Yûqannâ said to Lâwân, "Reinforcements from the Muslims are supposed to arrive." Lâwân went and saw that they had already arrived and opened a secret gate for them. As Mâlik's رضي الله عنه men captured the fort they proclaimed, "Allâhu Akbar! Allâh has conquered. The Disbelievers have been defeated."

The Romans then threw down their weapons and begged for immunity. The Muslims therefore stopped fighting and took them all prisoner.

When Mâlik thanked Yûqannâ and his men, Yûqannâ told him about Lâwân. Mâlik replied, "When Allâh desires something He creates the means for its fulfilment."

Qays bin 'Uqbah narrates from Safwân who narrates from 'Amr bin 'Abdirrahmân who narrates from Jubayr who narrates from his father:

I asked Abû Lubâbah bin al-Munthir about the conquest of 'Azâz and the murder of Darius. I did not know the story and wanted the correct version. He said:

After the battle Mâlik gathered the prisoners, booty, robes, gold, silver and vessels. He ordered these to be taken out of the fort and appointed Qays bin Sa'd over the fort. Like me, Qays had lost an eye at al-Yarmûk and both of us had participated in the Battle of Badr with Rasûlullâh ﷺ. Absolutely everything was taken out of 'Azâz. Mâlik walked around 'Azâz, looking for Darius and found him dead.

Mâlik : Who killed this accursed man?

Lâwan : My elder brother, Luke.

5) Luke embraces Islâm

Mâlik called for Luke and said, "How can you kill your own father? We have never heard of any Roman besides you killing his father."

Luke : I did it out of love for your religion. There is in the chapel of this fort an ancient priest. We studied the Gospel and Roman sciences under him. One day when the two of us were alone in the chapel I said to him, "O Abû al-Munthir, do you not see how the 'Arabs have conquered most of Syria and have defeated the armies of Caesar? We never thought that they would be capable of that because there is no nation weaker than them. God helped them despite their weakness. Have you read anything about this in the Roman books and prophecies or the Greek prophecies?"

"O my son," he replied, "Yes, I have read about it. In fact, we had already informed Caesar before these things started happening. He gathered all the patricians, princes, bishops etc. and told them that the 'Arabs would certainly rule the land beneath his throne. We have also been informed that their Prophet said - *The Earth was folded*

up for me and I saw its East and West. Soon the Empire of my Ummah will conquer all that was folded up for me."

I asked, "O father, what do you say about their prophet?"

He replied, "O my son, it is written in our scriptures that God will send a prophet in al-Hijâz and Christ, Jesus son of Mary, had prophesied about him. However, we do not know if this is him or not."

I then realised that he was withholding information from me, fearing that I would expose him. When I saw Yûqannâ and his men captured I said to myself, "Yûqannâ killed his brother, Yûhannâ, and had resisted the 'Arabs. Now the same man embraces their religion. This can only be because he recognises them to be on the Truth. Now go and kill your father, free Yûqannâ and his men and enter their religion for without doubt it is the true one." Then when my father fell asleep in a drunken stupor I killed him and went to free Yûqannâ, but found that Lâwân had overtaken me.

(This would mean that the other brothers overheard Lâwân speaking to Yûqannâ. Luke might have been the actual killer while the others were accomplices. When he went to free the Muslims they were already freed - translator's note)

Malik ﷺ : O boy, why did you do this?

Luke : Out of love for your religion. I bear witness that there is no deity besides Allâh and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh.

Mâlik ﷺ : May Allâh accept and guide you.

Mâlik ﷺ then left 'Azâz, leaving Sa'îd bin 'Âmir in charge of Yûqannâ's 100. The men of ar-Râwindât were brought before him and he offered them Islâm. When they refused he had them beheaded.

6) Conversion of 'Azâz

'Abdul Malik bin Muhammad narrates from Hassân bin Ka'b who narrates from 'Abdul Wâhid who narrates the conquest of 'Azâz as has been mentioned from 'Abdullâh bin Qurt al-Azdî ﷺ:

As for those who say that Darius was killed by his wife and daughters, their report is wrong - and Allâh knows best.

When Mâlik ﷺ intended departing, the prisoners were brought before him. They were 1,000 youths, 2,000 women and girls, 245 elders and monks and 180 elderly people. He noticed an old man whose appearance inspired awe and said, "If my insight is correct, then this is the priest about whom Luke and Lâwân informed me."

He called the two brothers and asked, "Is this the priest about whom Luke spoke?"

Luke : Yes.

Mâlik ﷺ : Old man, you are a scholar of the scriptures, so how can you conceal the truth from those who are entitled to it?

Priest : By God! I never concealed the truth from those who are entitled to it. I feared that the Romans would kill me because the truth is heavy. My brothers and sons had already been killed for the sake of truth so I feared what would happen to me.

Mâlik ﷺ : Will you enter our Dîn?

Priest : I first want to question you about certain matters which I have read in the Gospel.

Mâlik ﷺ : Certainly.

As the priest was about to speak the fort was suddenly filled with screams which terrified the people. Mâlik ﷺ jumped to see what was happening, thinking that the Romans had betrayed him. He met a group of Muslims who said, "O commander, get ready. We see dust rising from the Manbij and Bazâ'ah road and do not know what it is."

Malik ﷺ and his men mounted, waiting for whoever was coming. When they arrived they appeared to be Muslim cavalry with prisoners and booty followed by 1,000 more Muslim horsemen. They were a raiding expedition Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had sent under al-Fadl bin al-'Abbâs ﷺ. They had raided Manbij, al-Bab and Bazâ'ah and had gained much booty. After salâm, al-Fadl ﷺ asked Mâlik ﷺ his story, so he told him that Allâh had conquered 'Azâz and degraded her people. He narrated Yûqannâ's story and said, "I cannot leave until I question this priest."

Al-Fadl ﷺ : O priest, say what you have to say.

Priest : Tell me what did God create before the Heavens and Earth?

Al-Fadl ﷺ : First He created the Tablet and the Pen. It is also said, "the Throne and the Seat," or "Time and Era," or "Numbers and Calculation." It is said that he first

created a jewel. He looked at it and then it became water. He then created His Throne as a sapphire above the water. He gazed at the water which stirred and thundered. Vapour arose from which Allâh created the sky and then the Earth. It is said that He first created Intelligence so that the creation may benefit from it. It is also said that the first creation was Light and Darkness and He demanded that they confess to His divinity. The Darkness refused while Light obeyed. So He created Paradise from the Light because he was pleased with it and created Hell from the Darkness because He was angry at it. He created the blessed souls from the Light and the wretched souls from the Darkness. Everyone returns to his real abode. It is said that He first created a dot. Through His awesome Gaze it dissolved and became the letter *alif* with which He began His Honourable Book. Pure is He Who made his Book from a single dot. He made the creation from a single dot and gives death by taking their souls and will revive them through the blowing of the Trumpet.

Priest : I testify that there is no deity besides Allâh and that Mu<u>h</u>ammad is the Messenger of Allâh. This is knowledge which only the Prophets of Allâh possessed.

Seeing this, all the people of 'Azâz embraced Islâm except for a handful.

7) Yûqannâ is appointed governor of Antioch

'Âmir bin Ya<u>h</u>yâ narrates from Asad bin Muslim who narrates from Dârim bin 'Âyyâsh who narrates from his grandfather:

The people of 'Azâz embraced Islâm because the priest whom they trusted had embraced Islâm. Mâlik ﷺ and al-Fa<u>d</u>l ﷺ then returned to Aleppo. Yûqannâ then said, "By Allâh! How can I show my face to the Muslims when my plan was unsuccessful? I will now go to Antioch. Perhaps Allâh will grant me victory."

Al-Fa<u>d</u>l ﷺ : Allâh Most High said to his Prophet ﷺ,

لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ ٱلْأَمْرِ شَىْءٌ

You have no say in the matter. [3:128]

So you should not fill your heart with grief.

Yûqannâ : I swear that I will not return until Allâh whitens my face so that I can face my Muslim brothers again.

Yûqannâ was accompanied by 200 of his tribesmen who now had firm faith and whose families were still in Aleppo. He led them to Antioch. As they neared the city he selected four of them and ordered the rest to come to him after four days. The five of them would take the H̱ârim road as if they were fleeing from the 'Arabs according to a plan by Yûqannâ. The rest would take the Arnâẖ road. Yûqanna said, "We will meet in Antioch."

The two parties went their separate ways. Yûqannâ rode on until he reached the monastery of Sam'ân which overlooks the sea. At Sam'ân there were horsemen and footmen guarding the roads. When the Romans saw the Muslims they went to question them. Yûqannâ said, "I am the prince of Aleppo. I am fleeing from the 'Arabs."

The police chief then ordered them to be taken to Heraclius.

They arrived at Antioch to find Heraclius praying in the Cathedral of Youth. When he finished the police brought the five Muslims to him and said, "O Caesar, Peter, the chief of police is at Sam'ân Monastery. He sent this man, who claims to be the prince of Aleppo, together with these four."

Heraclius : O Yûqannâ, why have you come here? I have heard that you entered the religion of the 'Arabs.

Yûqannâ : O Caesar, you have heard correctly. However, I only did that so that I could escape their oppression, their ugly sight and their horrid stench. I said to them, "I will bring 'Azâz and its governor into your hands." I then went with 100 of their chiefs and told them to send 1,000 after me. I secretly intended that once they had entered the fort I would capture them and hand them over to you. However, Darius jumped to conclusions against me and did not understand my secret. He believed what his spy told him and disbelieved me. He therefore imprisoned us. The 'Arabs arrived and managed to kill the people because Luke had killed his father and freed the 'Arabs and myself. During the fight these four men and I escaped and fled to you. If I had no love for my faith would I have killed my brother, Yûẖannâ, and persevered against the 'Arab siege for a full year?

The patricians and princes who were present backed him and said, "O Caesar, Yûqannâ is truthful. His deeds and bravery will soon become apparent to you."

Heraclius's face brightened. He gave Yûqannâ the robe he was wearing, a belt and a crown and said, "If Aleppo has been taken from you then I now appoint you the Lord-Governor of Antioch."

8) Yûqannâ's men reach Antioch

While Yûqannâ was thanking Heraclius the commandant of Iron Bridge came and said that 200 Aleppan horsemen had arrived at Iron Bridge. They claimed to be Romans of Yûqannâ's clan who were fleeing from the 'Arabs.

Heraclius : O Lord-Governor, ride off and investigate these people. If they really are your friends welcome them and take them as your personal army. If they are not, then bring them here so that I can see for myself. Be careful that they are not acting on behalf of the 'Arabs, that they are not converts to Islâm from Sayjar, <u>H</u>amâh, ar-Rastan, Jûsîyah, Ba'labakk, Damascus or <u>H</u>awrân.

Yûqannâ : Yes Caesar.

He then mounted and left accompanied by courtiers and aristocrats. When they reached Iron Bridge Yûqannâ ordered the chief of police to bring the 200. Upon seeing them he welcomed them. They in turn upon seeing all the pomp which Caesar had given him, walked to him and kissed his bridle.

Yûqannâ : How did you manage to escape the 'Arabs?

Aleppans : O sir, we went out riding with an 'Arab leader at Manbij and Bazâ'ah. On the way back to Aleppo we headed for 'Azâz but found it to be in 'Arab hands. At night we escaped and came here.

The Romans had been listening and went to inform Caesar. When Yûqannâ brought them to the Imperial court Caesar granted each of them robes and welcomed them. He ordered them to serve Yûqannâ to whom he gave a house facing his palace.

Yûqannâ : O Caesar, you know that this abode's pleasure will not last forever. Lord Christ compared it to carrion and its hankerers to dogs drawn to it. It is narrated that he saw a bird, beautiful in every aspect. After skinning it he found it to be the ugliest thing possible. He asked, "Who are you?"

"The world," it replied, "My outside is beautiful and my inside is ugly."

I have explained this example to you, O Caesar, so that you may know that the human body is not empty of jealousy. As soon as the world comes to someone then those

who are envious against him increase in number. I fear that they will speak to Caesar and wrongfully slander me. If Caesar should turn away from me and grant this post to someone else then I will still remain his loyal follower.

He then began to weep.

Heraclius : O Lord-Governor, I have not given you this post except in complete confidence. I will hand over to you whoever speaks against you so that you may do with him as you please.

9) Heraclius's daughter

Yûqannâ thanked him and requested permission to attend to his new duties when the postal horses arrived with messengers from Caesar's daughter, Olivia, who was at Mar'ash. They said, "She fears the 'Arabs and wants to come to you until you can find a solution. She requests you to send an army to bring her to you."

Heraclius : There is nobody else for such a job except the Lord-Governor, Yûqannâ.

Yûqannâ kissed the ground and said, "To hear and obey your word..."

Heraclius then gave him 1,000 men and 200 of his elite troops.

Yûqannâ led the 1,200 and raised a cross which was covered in soft gold above his head. They travelled hard until they reached Olivia at Mar'ash. She was Heraclius's youngest daughter and he had appointed her over that region. He had her married to Banaster son of Haris. The people called him 'The sword of Christianity' due to his bravery, but he had died of his wounds at al-Yarmûk.

Yûqannâ took Olivia on the main highway back to Antioch. He hoped to meet a Muslim spy or an allied Christian so that he could inform Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ that he had achieved a station with Heraclius in the Roman Empire. When they reached Brocade Meadow at night, the scouts returned. They were frightened.

Yûqannâ : What is wrong?

Scouts : O Lord-Governor! There is an army camped here. When we approached them we found them to be 'Arabs who were all sleeping. We have no doubt that they are Muslims.

Yûqannâ : Be prepared and on alert. Defend your religion and strive against your enemy. Fight for the sake of Caesar's daughter. Do not let her fall into enemy hands.

Be the best army which fights in gratitude to its master's favours. Once the battle begins, capture them and beware of killing any of them. Know that the 'Arabs are certainly heading towards Caesar and his companions. If any Roman is captured we can secure his release by exchanging the prisoners for him. I have read in the books of Herfanius, the sage, "He who looks at the end result remains safe. He who has a task should take due precaution. He who is treacherous will be betrayed himself." Now go with God's blessing.

They slackened their reins and aimed their spears, heading for the 'Arabs. When the other party heard them coming they came out proclaiming the names of Jesus, son of Mary, and the Honoured Cross.

'Arabs : Who are you?

Yûqannâ : No, who are you?

'Arabs : We are the men of Jabalah bin al-Ayham.

Yûqannâ then dismounted to greet them and they greeted back.

Jabalah : Where do you come from?

Yûqannâ : From Mar'ash. I have Caesar's daughter with me, and from where are you coming?

Jabalah : From al-'Amq. We had taken their food supplies to them. On the way back we came across 200 horsemen at Marj Dâbiq, all of them fully armed. When we approached them they fiercely attacked us, their leader being a most violent man. He killed many of my men, whereas we were 2,000 and they only 200. He burned like a fire amongst us, but after continuous fighting we managed to capture them all. However, each one of them managed to kill one to three of us. The last one of them to remain was their leader. We shot arrows at his horse until we killed it. We then charged at him and captured him. It turns out that he is one of Muhammad's companions, Dirâr bin al-Azwar. We are now taking them to Caesar to hear his decision.

Yûqannâ pretended to be delighted and said, "I swear by my faith! You have accomplished a proud feat in capturing them, especially this boy. I have heard what he did to the heroes of Syria and the horsemen of Rome."

The two parties then went together to Antioch.

10) Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ writes to 'Umar ﷺ

Ash-Sharîd bin al-'Âsim narrates from Shirwân bin Mujazzil who narrates from Qâdim bin Bishr who narrates from Zâidah bin Ma'mar who narrates from Bashshâr who narrates from 'Awf who narrate from Sâlih who narrates from 'Abdullâh who narrates from his grandfather, Masrûq, and in another chain of narrators - 'Abbâd bin Âsim narrates from 'Imrân bin Husayn ﷺ:

The Muslims had conquered 'Azâz and Mâlik al-Ashtar ﷺ had left Sa'îd bin 'Amr al-Ghanawî in charge and then met al-Fadl bin al-'Abbâs ﷺ. The two then returned to Aleppo where Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ rejoiced at the safety of the Muslims and the conquest of 'Azâz. When he asked Mâlik about Yûqannâ, Mâlik ﷺ replied that they had a secret agreement between them for Yûqannâ to go to Antioch to be in the presence of the dog of Rome because he felt ashamed to return to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ exclaimed, "May Allâh help him, grant him victory and forgive him. He has shown us incomparable deeds."

He then wrote to 'Umar ﷺ:

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

From : Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ 'Âmir bin al-Jarrâh

To : Commander of the Believers, 'Umar bin al-Khattâb

Salâm 'alayka

I praise Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity and I convey salutations upon His Prophet Muhammad.

All Muslims should praise Allâh for blessing us with the conquest of the castles and forts of Disbelief. He has lowered their kings before us and granted us their lands and homes. Now He Who is Most Pure has conquered for us the fort of Aleppo followed by the 'Azâz Fort.

Prince Yûqannâ of Aleppo embraced Islâm and is a good Muslim who has become a helper of the Muslims against the

Disbelievers. This is after we had suffered much at his hands and Allâh is well aware of that. May Allâh reward him well now because Allâh has helped the Dîn through him. He is a well-wisher of the Muslims and destroys the Disbelievers.

He has now entered Antioch in a conspiracy against the dog of Rome. He has virtually cast himself into destruction for the sake of Allâh and His Rasûl ﷺ.

At the time of writing this letter, we had already decided to march on Antioch and get the despot of Rome because there remains no other nearby fort besides Antioch which is in enemy hands. We hope to capture Heraclius, his throne and his treasures just as Rasûlullâh ﷺ had promised us. So strengthen us with your du'â because it is the weapon of the Believers and the destruction of the Disbelievers.

Peace and Allâh's mercy and blessings be upon you and all the Muslims with you.

He then took out the state's one-fifth share of the booty and handed it over to Ribâh bin Ghânim al-Yashkurî. He gave him 200 horsemen, including Salamah bin al-Akwa', Qatâdah bin 'Amr, 'Abdullâh bin Bashshâr, Jâbir bin 'Abdillâh and other such men upon whom be Allâh's pleasure. They took the one-fifth share and set off.

11) Dirâr ؓ is captured

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ then sent 200 cavalry under Dirâr ؓ on a raiding expedition. Amongst them was Safînah ؓ, the freed slave of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. They left with allied Christian guides until they reached Marj Dâbiq at dawn. One of the Christians then said, "Have mercy on your horses."

They dismounted and rested their horses for the rest of the day and night and before they knew it, Jabalah had arrived at dawn. As the shouting rose Dirar ؓ and about 100 men mounted. The rest could not mount due to the attacks of the Christians and so they had to fight on foot while their horses fled. Each footman managed to kill his foe, but they joined forces on them and took the 100 footmen prisoner.

Dirâr ﷺ called out to the remaining 100, "O 'Arab youth, the enemy attacked you when your guard was down. They are 'Arabs just like you and this (time of battle) is the best moment in the Eyes of Allâh. Be firm and do not be weak-hearted. You know that your Prophet has said that Jannah lies under the shadow of swords. Allâh Most High has said,

مِّن فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ مَعَ ٱلصَّـٰبِرِينَ

How many a small group have overcome a large force with Allâh's leave? And Allâh is with the patient ones. [2:249]

Maysarah bin 'Âmir narrates:

Rabî'ah bin Ma'mar bin Abî 'Awf was with us at Marj Dâbiq. He was highly eloquent and did not speak except in rhyming speech. He arranged his words beautifully. We would listen to his rhymes and memorise them. When he heard Dirâr ﷺ encouraging us he said, "O 'Arab youth, you will never attain Jannah except through being patient in adversity. Allâh will not enter into it anyone who hates Jihâd. Allâh has a Jannah in the skies but it is surrounded by hateful things. The highest rank is that of martyrdom. So please the Knower of the seen and the unseen. This Jihâd has reached its peak and hypocrisy has been uprooted. Are you not the Sahâbah of the Prophet of this era? Why have you become despondent about reward and help? Gladden the soul of the Chosen Prophet through steadfastness. Strengthen your resolve through pure intentions. Beware of deserting for you will then incur the wrath of the Great King. Help and steadfastness are two victorious armies. He who seeks the eternal abode regards the enemy as nothing. Rectify your desires and you will attain your Rabb's mercy. Be firm in your attack and you will attain your desire. Spear their throats and you will attain the women of Jannah and reside in palaces. Aim your spears at them and you will attain Jannah. Place your reliance on patience and you will attain victory. Beware of becoming like the Disbelievers. Avoid their path. The One Who knows their conditions and actions has said:

وَعَدَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ كَمَا ٱسْتَخْلَفَ ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ....

Allâh has promised those of you who believe and practise pious acts that He will grant them sovereignty over the Earth just as he granted it to those before them. [24:55]

Samurah bin Ghânim narrates:

By Allâh! He amazed us with his words. We attacked while Dirâr ﷺ recited:

ألا فاحملوا نحو اللئام الكواذب   لتروووا سيوفًا من دماء الكتائب
وردوا عن الدين المعظم في الورى   وارضوا إله العرش رب المواهب
فمن كان منكم يبتغي عتق ربه   من النار في يوم الجزا والمآرب
فيحمل هذا اليوم حملة ضيغم   ويرضي رسولاً في الورى غير كاذب

Attack the liars who are low,
Let your swords their blood show.
Defend the greatest Dîn in all the cosmos,
Please the Lord of the Throne, Most Generous.
Whoever seeks freedom from the Fire,
On Judgement Day and fulfilment of desire
Let him attack like lions today
And please the Messenger who never a lie did say.

Dirâr ﷺ attacked with us in the rear offering our lives and landing our swords and spears at the Christians. Dirâr ﷺ was like a blazing fire burning dry firewood. Jabalah was amazed at his fighting and ordered his men to shoot his horse with arrows. They fired and the horse came tumbling down with Dirar ﷺ. They pounced on him and captured him. The Christians captured the rest of the Muslims and went to Antioch. On the way they met Yûqannâ and Caesar's daughter as has been previously mentioned.

12) Safînah ﷺ and the lion

Ma'mar bin Rawâhah narrates from al-Qâsim who narrates from Khuzâmah bin 'Amr and Abû al-Munthir:

Safînah ﷺ, the freed slave of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, was amongst those captured in Dirâr's ﷺ expedition. At night he managed to escape and started to make his way to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. Suddenly a lion confronted him. He called out, "O lion, I am the freed slave of Rasûlullâh ﷺ." and proceeded to describe his relationship with Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

The lion came to him, wagging his tail and stood at his side. It indicated with its head that he should follow him.

Safînah ﷺ narrates:

I went with the lion at my side until it brought me to Muslim territory. It left me there and departed.

When Safînah reached the Muslim camp he told them about Dirar's ﷺ capture. The Muslims were upset and Khâlid and Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ wept and said, "There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty."

When Dirâr's ﷺ sister, Khawlah, heard she said, "Verily we belong to Allah and to Him do we return. O son of my mother, if only I knew whether you were tied up in chains or iron or flung in the wilderness or stained with your own blood."

She then recited:

Is there no informer to inform us after separation,
O my people, what is there that is keeping you away from us?
Had I known that it was to be the final meeting,
We could have stood to bid farewell.
O crow of separation, can you inform me
Of the tidings of the absent ones.
How bright were the days when they were close,
We were happy with them and they were like us.

May Allâh destroy the distance He decreed.
How ugly is that which distancing intends for us.
I remember the nights we were together,
Time has now separated.
If they should one day return to their abode of honour
We will kiss the hooves of their mounts.
Never will I forget when they said, "Dirâr is a prisoner!"
"We left him there in enemy territory."
These days are but borrowed time,
We are like words devoid of meaning.
I see that my heart does not choose anyone besides them
If they are mentioned my heart becomes consumed with grief.
Peace be on the beloved every moment
Even if they are far off and prevented from us.

I (al-Wâqidî) have been informed by Wâsil bin 'Awf:

The 'Arab women who had men imprisoned with Dirâr ﷺ gathered by Khawlah. Amongst them was Mazrû'ah bin 'Amlûq al-Himyarîyah, one of the most eloquent ones of that era. Her son, Sâbir bin 'Aws, was one of those captured with Dirâr ﷺ. She started mentioning him thus:

أيا ولدي قد زاد قلبي تلهبا   وقد أحرقت مني الخدود المدامعُ
وقد أضرمت نار المصيبة شعلة   وقد حميت مني الحشا والأضالع
وأسأل عنك الركب كي يخبرونني   بحالك كيما تستكن المدامع
فلم يكن فيهم مخبر عنك صادقًا   ولا منهم من قال إنك راجع
فيا ولدي مذ غبت كدرت عيشتي   فقلبي مصدوع وطرفي دامع
وفكري مقسوم وعقلي موله   ودمعي مسفوح وداري بلاقع
فإن تك حيًا صمت لله حجة   وإن تكن الأخرى فما العبد صانع

O my son, my heart is ablaze
And tears burn my cheeks.
The fire of disaster hides a flame
Which gives fever to my intestines and ribs
I ask the horsemen to tell me,
About you so that the tears can stop.
There was no good informer amongst them
Nor one to say that you are returning.
O son, ever since you disappeared my life has become gloomy
My heart is broken and my cheeks tear-streaked.
My thoughts are scattered and my mind is confused
My tears flow and my home is abandoned.
If you are living I will fast for the sake of Allâh
If not, then what is a slave to do?

Salamâ bint Sa'îd bin Zayd bin 'Amr bin Nufayl who was a great ascetic and worshipper then said to her, "Is this what Allâh has ordered you with? He has ordered you with patience and promised you reward for that. Have you not heard Allâh's saying:

ٱلَّذِينَ إِذَآ أَصَٰبَتْهُم مُّصِيبَةٌ قَالُوٓاْ إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّآ إِلَيْهِ رَٰجِعُونَ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ
عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَٰتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُهْتَدُونَ

Those whom when afflicted with misfortune say, "Verily we belong to Allâh and to Him do we return." Upon them is salutations and mercy from their Rabb and they are the guided ones. [2:157]

So you women should be patient in earning your reward and stop your sobbing."

13) The Sahâbah ‎ are brought before Heraclius

When Ribâh bin Ghânim al-Yashkurî brought the one-fifth share of the booty and Abû 'Ubaydah's letter to 'Umar, his arrival was announced in al-Madînah. The people therefore gathered in the Masjid to hear the news about the Muslims. Ribâh entered the Masjid, made salâm at the graves of Rasûlullâh and Abû Bakr and prayed two rak'ât. He then went to 'Umar, kissed his hand and gave him the letter. 'Umar read it out to the Muslims who raised cries of "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" and recited salutations upon Rasûlullâh. He then took the booty and wrote to Abû 'Ubaydah, ordering him to invade Antioch and not to be deterred by anything. He gave the letter to Ribâh for delivery.

Mâzin bin 'Abdi Rabbihi narrates from Mâlik bin Usayd who narrates from his grandfather, Marwân bin al-Jarîr:

When Abû 'Ubaydah received the reply he left on the same day for Antioch. As for Yûqannâ (upon whom be Allâh's mercy) and Jabalah (upon whom be Allâh's curse), they continued towards Antioch. A messenger went ahead to tell Caesar about the arrival of Olivia, Yûqannâ and the 200 Muslim prisoners. Caesar was delighted and ordered the entire city and all the churches to be decorated. The Romans obeyed and also gave charity to the poor. Caesar's nephew came out in a great glamorous parade. It was a memorable day. The courtiers and aristocrats walked ahead of Olivia and every single inhabitant of Antioch came out to witness the spectacle. They pushed the Sahâbah (who were all tied up) ahead of her. The Romans swore and spat at them. Both patricians and commoners went around them, swearing and spitting until Olivia entered the palace.

Jabalah and Yûqannâ came in front of Heraclius who gave them and their senior officers robes of honour. The Muslims were brought and made to stand in front of him. The chamberlain shouted, "Have respect! Prostrate!" but they ignored him.

Chamberlain : Why do you not respect Caesar and bow to him?

Dirâr : It is not permissible for us to bow down to a created being. Our Prophet has forbidden us from that.

Sahl bin Barqân narrates from as-Sâib bin Hazm who narrates from al-Hakam bin Mâzin:

Heraclius spoke to Dirâr and the others without a translator. He wanted the patricians and chamberlains to hear what he said to them regarding Rasûlullâh.

When he had first heard from Rasûlullâh ﷺ he gathered them and said, "This is the Prophet about whom Jesus son of Mary had prophesied. He will be the master of this era. His religion will triumph over east and west."

When he then proposed to pay Jizyah they wanted to kill him. He then wanted to explain to them what he had said, intending this for their benefit.

Heraclius : Who amongst you will answer my questions?

The Sa<u>h</u>âbah ؓ pointed at Qays bin 'A<u>s</u>im al-An<u>s</u>ârî ؓ, who was elderly and had witnessed all the conditions, miracles and expeditions of Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

Qays ؓ : O Caesar, say what you have to say.

14) The revelations of Rasûlullâh ﷺ

Heraclius : How did revelation first come to your Prophet?

Qays ؓ : A man of Makkah, al-<u>H</u>ârith bin Hishâm, asked him, "How does revelation come unto you?"

He replied, "Sometimes it comes like the ringing of a bell which is severest upon me and I hear revelation from it. Sometimes the angel comes in human form and I hear him."

Revelation would come down upon him in intense cold yet it was so severe upon him that his forehead dripped with perspiration. The revelation first came to him through true dreams. He would not dream anything except that it would transpire in exactly the same way the following morning. He began to love solitude and isolated himself in the cave of <u>H</u>irâ and resolved to spend several nights there in worship. He remained like this until an angel came to him and said, "Read!" He replied, "I cannot read!"

Rasûlullâh ﷺ said, "He grabbed me and pressed me against his chest until I experienced difficulty. He then released me and said again, "Read!" I said again, "I cannot read!" He then did the same thing until I experienced difficulty. He released me and said, "Read!" I repeated, "I cannot read!" For a third time he did this until I experienced difficulty. He released me and said,

ٱقْرَأْ بِٱسْمِ رَبِّكَ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ خَلَقَ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ٱقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ
ٱلْأَكْرَمُ ٱلَّذِى عَلَّمَ بِٱلْقَلَمِ عَلَّمَ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

Read in the name of your Rabb Who created. Who created man from a clot of blood. Read! And your Rabb is Most Noble, He Who taught by means of the pen. He taught man that which he knew not. [96:1-5]

Rasûlullâh ﷺ repeated these words which made his heart tremble. He went to Khadîjah bint Khuwaylid and said, "Cover me! Cover me!"

She then covered him with a blanket until the fear subsided. He related the whole incident said to her and said, "I feared for my life."

"Never," she replied, "Allâh would never disgrace you. You maintain family ties; you support others; you give the destitute; you entertain guests; you help the afflicted ones and stand up for the sake of Truth."

Qays ؓ then continued narrating the entire lengthy hadîth.

Qays ؓ : Rasûlullâh ﷺ said, "While I was walking I heard a voice from the sky. I raised my gaze and saw that same angel who had appeared before me in Hirâ. He was sitting on a chair hovering between the sky and Earth. I felt frightened and went to Khadîjah and said to her, 'Cover me! Cover me!' So Allâh revealed:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْمُدَّثِّرُ قُمْ فَأَنذِرْ

O covered one! Arise and warn! [74:1-2]

Thereafter the revelation came continuously."

I was with Rasûlullâh ﷺ in the Masjid one day when a man arrived. He made his camel sit and tied it. He then entered and made salâm to which we replied.

Man : Who is Muhammad?

Muslims : The one with the white face.

Man : O grandson of 'Abdul Muttalib, I wish to ask you some very difficult questions, so do not evade me.

Rasûlullâh ﷺ : Ask what you wish to.

Man : In the name of your Rabb and the Rabb of those before you, did Allâh send you to all mankind?

Rasûlullâh ﷺ : In Allâh's name, yes!

Man : In Allah's name, did Allâh order you to pray five Salawât every day and night?

Rasûlullâh ﷺ : In Allâh's name, yes!

Man : In Allâh's name, did Allâh order you to fast this month every year?

Rasûlullâh ﷺ : In Allâh's name, yes!

Man : In Allâh's name, did Allâh order you to take charity from our rich and distribute it amongst our poor?

Rasûlullâh ﷺ : In Allâh's name, yes!

Man : I believe in what you have brought. I am my people's messenger. I am Dammâm bin Tha'labah, the brother of Banû Sa'd bin Bakr.

15) Description of Rasûlullâh ﷺ

Heraclius : I ask you in the name of your religion, what did you witness of his miracles?

Qays ؓ : I was travelling with him when a Bedouin came to him. The Prophet ﷺ said to him, "Will you bear witness that there is no deity besides Allâh and that I, Muhammad, am the Messeneger of Allâh?"

"Who will bear witness for you?" asked the Bedouin.

"That tree!" replied the Prophet and called the tree which was at the edge of the valley. It came streaking though the ground until it stood in front of him. He asked it three times to testify, so it said, "You are Muhammad Rasûlullâh ﷺ."

Then upon his order it returned to its place.

Heraclius : We find it written in our scriptures that if one of his followers commits an evil it is written against him as one, but if he does good it is written for him as ten.

Qays ﷺ : Allâh says:

مَن جَآءَ بِٱلْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُۥ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا ۖ وَمَن جَآءَ بِٱلسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَىٰٓ إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا....

He who brings a good deed receives ten the like of it and he who brings an evil deed is not punished except for the like of it. [6:160]

Heraclius : I know that the prophet about whom Jesus prophesied will bear witness against the people on the Day of Judgement.

Qays ﷺ : He is our Prophet ﷺ. Allâh says:

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِىُّ إِنَّآ أَرْسَلْنَـٰكَ شَـٰهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَدَاعِيًا....

O Prophet! We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of glad-tidings, a warner and an invitor... [33:45]

As for his testimony on the day of Judgement, our Rabb says:

...وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَىٰ هَـٰٓؤُلَآءِ شَهِيدًا

And We will bring you as a witness against them. [4:41]

Heraclius : The one whom I describe to you is such that God orders His slaves to go to him during his lifetime and to convey salutations upon him both during his lifetime and after his demise.

Qays ﷺ : He is our Prophet ﷺ. Allâh says:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ وَمَلَٰٓئِكَتَهُۥ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى ٱلنَّبِيِّ ۚ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ صَلُّوا۟ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا۟ تَسْلِيمًا

Verily Allâh and the angels convey salutations upon the Prophet. O you who believe! Convey salutations and salâm upon him. [33:56]

Heraclius : The one who has been described by Christ will ascend to the heavens where the Most High will speak to him.

Qays ﷺ : By Allah! He is our Prophet ﷺ. Allâh says:

سُبْحَٰنَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِۦ لَيْلًا مِّنَ ٱلْمَسْجِدِ ٱلْحَرَامِ إِلَى ٱلْمَسْجِدِ ٱلْأَقْصَا....

Pure is he Who took His slave on a night journey from the sacred Masjid (in Makkah) to the Furthest Masjid (in Baytul Muqaddas). [17:1]*

**(...and then to the Heavens - translator's note)*

The chief Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church who was the head of their religion was sitting and listening to this. He turned to Heraclius and said, "O Caesar, the one described by Jesus was not sent before him and has not yet been sent. This man is giving a false interpretation."

D̲irâr ﷺ : Lies drip from your face! This disgraceful, long-bearded man lies! O dog of Rome, it is you and your ilk who in reality deny both 'Îsâ and Mu̲hammad ﷺ. Do you not know that 'Îsâ read about him in the Gospels, that Mûsâ read about him in the Torah, that Dâwûd read about him in the Psalms. Our Prophet was sent with the best of religions. His prophethood and messengership is certified in Allâh's Honourable Book and all the other books revealed to the Prophets before him. He is our Prophet, Mu̲hammad bin 'Abdillâh bin 'Abdil Mut̲talib al-Makkî ﷺ, but the veils of Disbelief prevent you from recognising him.

16) Dirâr ﷺ and the Patriarch

Heraclius : You have broken the etiquette of the Imperial Court by insulting Christianity's loftiness. Who are you?

Qays ﷺ : He is a Companion of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, Dirâr bin al-Azwar. Please do not speak badly of him.

Heraclius : Is this the one about whom I had heard that he sometimes fights on horseback, sometimes on foot, sometimes fully clothed, sometimes not?

Qays ﷺ : Yes.

Heraclius then remained silent.

The Patriarch who had initially been smiling was so infuriated at Dirâr's ﷺ words that he could hardly control himself. He stood up to leave the assembly. The chamberlains and patricians were affected by him and also became angry. Heraclius feared for his life and said to them, "Cut him down with your swords. Wipe out all traces of him."

They then stabbed him (Dirâr ﷺ) a total of 114 times, except that through the grace of Allâh Who desired that he live, none of them proved lethal. The patriarch was now happy and said, "Cut off his tongue."

Yûqannâ thought, "I can never let that accursed one exercise such power over the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ."

He kissed the ground before Heraclius, prayed for the perpetuation of his reign and said, "O Caesar, this is not right. I say that you leave this boy alone until his wounds heal. Then we will crucify him at the city gate so that the hearts of the Romans may heal because this boy's words have an effect on them and he killed many of their fathers, sons and brothers. In addition, the 'Arabs will lose courage once they hear of this."

Yûqannâ was hoping for Dirâr's ﷺ escape and thought, "By night Caesar should have calmed down and might release him."

Heraclius replied, "Take him and guard him until tomorrow."

Yûqannâ took him to his house and when he wanted to tend to his wounds found that none of them were lethal. Through Allâh's grace not so much as a vein or a sinew was cut. He stitched the wounds, applied medicine and brought him food and drink.

D̲irar ﷺ opened his eyes and saw Yûqannâ and his son. He did not know of Yûqannâ's deception, so he said, "If you two have become Disbelievers then Allâh has put you at my service to the extent that you medicate me. If you are still Believers then good and welcome. Perhaps through your blessings that old lady in al-H̲ijâz who is sick with crying will be reunited with my sister (who is with the army) and I. She is in this state because I am the last of her loved ones and she has not heard of me for some time. So if you two can write to Khawlah convey my salâm and tell her of my speech with the Disbelievers so that she can tell my mother."

After resting in the night he said, "In Allah's name write what I dictate to you."

Yûqannâ's son then wrote down his dictated poem, letter for letter:

O you two! In Allah's name convey my salâm to my family in Makkah and al-H̲ijr
You will receive a thousand blessings as long as you live.
What you do will not be wasted by Allâh, my pain is already lightened.
Through your act I have received relief, in that way goodness amongst people goes.
I am not dying but I have left an old lady in grief,
She is weak and cannot bear life's afflictions
Which destroyed wheat leaving only wormwood, brittle plants and flowers.
I was her support and greatly and greatly honoured her even when poverty struck me.
I would feed her with what I hunted - rabbits, jerboa, deer, baby deer and others.
I protect her in all conditions, good or bad.
I desire nothing besides Allâh and I wage Jihad against armies.
I please the best of all creation, Muh̲ammad ﷺ, in order to be successful on the Day of Judgement.
He who fears Judgement Day must please Allâh and fight against the

worshippers of the cross, the sons of Disbelief
Thus I fought and speared very Disbeliever on the day of battle.
You say that this separation has passed its time.
I have no patience for it.
O brother! Is there no-one to unite us?
When man leaves his homeland he either returns or is destroyed.
Do they not inform her about her brother? He sends greetings and dies imprisoned by the Disbelievers.
Wounded in defending Islâm, O doves deliver this letter.
Take my message to the army and chiefs of Islâm.
Say that Dirâr is shackled, away from his homeland and in an inhospitable place.
O dove! Listen to the words of this stranger - he is in the humiliation of captivity.
If my loved ones ask about me tell them that my tears are like rain shed by clouds.
If my sister asks about me tell her that I have been stabbed by the edges of sharp cutting swords.
O doves of Najd! My everything is at home! Tell them that Dirâr remains sighing.
Tell them that he is a prisoner whose side and chest are in pain.
He is only 18 years old.
On his cheeks are tears due to loss of home and unhealable wounds.
He went for Jihâd but the lowly ones' sons betrayed him.
May Allâh bless you two. Bury me and write on my grave, "Here lies a stranger."
O doves of the Hatîm and Zamzam! Will you not tell my mother about me?

Perhaps the days will make things lighter and free the stranger's heart of worry.

After the poem was written, Yûqannâ wrote a letter to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ to inform him of his plans and sent the letters with a reliable man.

17) Muslims reach Iron Bridge

Jâbir bin 'Imrân ad-Dawsî narrates:

We were in the land of al-Balâṯ when Ma'n bin 'Aws (whom Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had appointed over the vanguard) arrived with a Roman and said to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "Take him with you. He claims to be a messenger."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ took him aside to speak to him secretly.

Messenger : I have brought you letters.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : From whom?

Messenger : From Yûqannâ and a prisoner in Antioch called Ḏirâr bin al-Azwar.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ took the letter and read it out to those whom he held in special honour. All of them wept. When Khawlah heard she came to him and said, "O Trusted One of the Ummah, let me hear my brother's poem."

He had only read a part of it when she exclaimed, "Verily we belong to Allah and to Him do we return. There is no ability to avoid evil and no power to do good except through Allâh, the Most High, the Most Mighty. If Allâh wills I will avenge him."

The Muslims memorised the poem and it spread amongst them. The one who was most grieved was Khâlid ﷺ.

'Abdul Malik bin Muḫammad narrates from Ḫassân bin Ka'b who narrates from 'Abdul Wâḫid bin 'Awn who narrates from Mûsâ bin 'Imrân al-Yashkurî who narrates from 'Âmir bin Yaḫyâ who narrates from Asad bin Muslim who narrates from Dârim bin 'Ayyâsh:

The resolute people conquered many castles and forts such as ar-Râwindât, Qûraṣ and Bâsûṯâ. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ marched continuously until he reached Iron Bridge.

When Heraclius heard of this he became terrified and ordered tents to be pitched near Iron Bridge. The princes left and had their tents pitched. He opened the armoury and distributed weapons. Giving Yûqannâ a robe, he said to him, "O Lord-Governor, I am appointing you over the entire army."

He then gave him a cross which was kept in the Cathedral of al-Qaysân and was only taken out during great events. He said, "O Lord-Governor, keep this cross in front of you and rely upon it for victory. It will help you."

Yûqannâ gave it to his son and told him to keep it in front of him.

Heraclius mounted his horse and went with his princes and chamberlains to pray for victory in the cathedral of al-Qaysân. After praying he commanded that the 200 prisoners be sacrificed. Yûqannâ kissed his hands and said, "O Chief of Rome, God did not put you over the land and His slaves except that He knew you are too intelligent to do that. The sage, Disqur, said, "Intelligence raises the grand and the noble accompany it. It is mankind's honour and creation's lamp." O Caesar, the 'Arabs have come against us with all their numbers and equipment and have reached Iron Bridge. We will have to fight them although they have the better position. We do not know the outcome. If you kill these prisoners and they capture any of us, their hands then will not spare him. Therefore spare them until we can see how things transpire. If any of our men are captured then we can exchange these hostages for them."

Imperial officials : The Lord-Governor speaks the truth.

Patriarch : O Caesar, bring them to the cathedral which is the most beautiful in the city. Order the girls to decorate themselves and come here. When the Muslims see how beautiful and attractive they look and how pleasant they smell they will incline to them and enter our religion. This will demoralise the Muslims.

Heraclius agreed. When the Muslims arrived the priests raised their voices in reciting the Gospel. The Muslims responded with, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar! The disputers have lied. They have gone far astray. Allâh never took a son and there is no deity besides Him."

Amongst the Muslims was a virtuous and learned Yamanî, Rifâ'ah bin Zuhayr. He had read the past scriptures and mastered the sciences of the Himyar. He composed poetry and structured verses. When he saw the cathedral filled with Disbelievers venerating the cross and prostrating to statues he shouted, "Allâhu Akbar! Allâhu Akbar! Lâ ilâha illallâh!Those who have strayed from Allâh, the companions of the

Devil, have lied. Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâh is One! The Most Merciful has no father. He is Singular and Independent upon Whom all depend. None can be associated with Him. He has no opposite, no partner. He brought all things into existence. He shaped all creation, created the cosmos and set the Earth and Heavens into system. He is the First without any beginning. He is the Last without any end. He does not die or perish. He does not come to an end or become old. He has no partner, no minister, no companion, no advisor. There is none like unto Him and He is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing."

18) The great Romans and 'Arabs

The cathedral was filled with confusion at his words. The priests came to him with their staffs, but the chamberlains indicated that they should not harm him and should leave him. They left him.

Heraclius : What is your name, O 'Arab brother?

Rifâ'ah ﵁ : O Caesar, why do you ask my name? We are not of the same kind. What can you ask me?

Patriarch : He is right - we are not the same. He has no knowledge or information about which we can question him. He is just a Bedouin who only knows the habitation of the desert and the company of evil. Our sages are famous and the wisdom of our land is quite apparent. It springs from the Greeks and has been preserved by our ancestors, the Syriacs. Where do the 'Arabs have wisdom to pass down to their generations or sciences to teach each other? Virtue solely belongs to our scholars and justice to our emperors: Alexander, Ptolemy, Maurice, Justinian, Armuyil, Antimus, Argus, Sergius, Astius, Astanius, Sarghurius, Nusidi who founded Antioch, Saflius, Arisa who was a prophet and emperor, Yalinius who founded Edessa and Manbij.

Wastibus was the soothsayer who informed the emperor of his time that a child had been born who would speak to the Lord, have prestige and destroy Pharoah. It was from us that the sage, Fastin, came and it was from us that sciences sprang. Aramunia was from us. He built and named Great Rûmîyah. Then there is Mansatalius who compiled the first book describing the full extent of the Earth with its mountains, oceans, cities, plants and animals. He described each nation and its specialities and described each region's gold, silver and jewel-mines. He counted all the springs on Earth and listed all their names as well as all the valleys, gorges, mountains, cities and amazing sights. Edrawas Qalansab was the Roman who said, "May God not

resurrect me with those who will be told to go with the Devil and his legions to Hell. O poor fellow! O reader of my book who refuses to abstain from the filth of this world and its dark lusts which contaminate spiritual senses. For you to ascend to highest heaven study this wisdom. It is the ladder to the spiritual realm. He who is deprived of this has lost his way to his Creator, the Fashioner of his shape, the Originator.

Heraclius listened to this but thought that the Patriarch's jibe was actually intended for Jabalah who was present with his son. There existed a bitter enmity between the Patriarch and him. The Patriarch had built a massive monastery where he held a festival annually. Romans from various places would attend and bring offerings, money, drapes and candles. All this was under the Pariarch's direction. When Heraclius granted the land which contained the monastery to Jabalah, he took over the monastery and built a city over it which he named after himself. It is in fact the present city of Jabalah.

Sulaymân bin 'Âmir narrates from Mansûr al-Juwanî who narrates from Hajjâj bin Jurayh who narrates from Yahyâ bin 'Umârah bin Abî al-Hasan:

Rifâ'ah ﷺ merely smiled at the Patriarch's speech.

Rifâ'ah ﷺ : O Patriarch, you have praised such people who have no right to greatness. There is none who is noble or great amongst them. There is none amongst them who recognise Allâh to be One, Allâh Who has no equal or peer. Virtue and excellence belong solely to the descendants of Ismâ'îl bin Ibrâhîm. They have the Sacred House, the Zamzam well, Ibrâhîm's standing place and all the other sacred places. Amongst the 'Arabs are the Tabâbi'ah, the Hamâh and the Ashbâl dynasties who ruled the length and breadth of the Earth. Amongst them was Alexander the great king who ruled both ends (qarnayn) of the Earth. He penetrated the dark regions and all the people of Earth submitted to him. He reached the rising place and setting place of the sun. He subjugated their kings and made them into his soldiers and helpers. Allâh therefore named him 'Thul Qarnayn' – he of the two Qarn.

(Qarn has several meanings. It would appear that 'top part of the sun' is intended here - translator's note)

Amongst them are Saba bin Ya'rab bin Qahtân, Shaddad bin 'Âd, Shadîd bin 'Âd, 'Amr Thul Athqân bin Sakasik, al-Hudhud bin 'Âd, Luqmân bin 'Âd, Sha'bân bin Aksîr bin Tannûkh, 'Abbâd bin Raqîm, Hâdîl bin 'Utbân who used to speak of great wisdom and mysteries, Mûsâ bin Jalhamah bin Siyâsah bin 'Ujlân bin Yâqid bin

Rakh and Thamûd bin Kan'ân. From us came Saba bin Yashjub, our first crowned king. Himyar then ruled after him followed by Tubba' who was also crowned. From us came Wâil bin Himyar, the crowned one, and 'Âd bin Himyar, the crowned one. Allâh's prophet, Hanzhalah bin Safwan of the people of ar-Rass is of us. From us is Nufayl bin 'Abdil Maddân bin Kashdam bin 'Abd Yalîl bin Jurhum bin Qahtân bin Hûd upon whom be peace. He built forts, mined treasures and led armies. Allâh made him heir to the knowledge of the Prophet, Hanzhlah bin Safwân ﷺ. Allâh sealed our prestige and raised our value by making Muhammad from amongst us. So we are chiefs and you are slaves.

19) The Patriarch becomes philosophical

Sufyân narrates from 'Abdu Rabbihi who narrates from Rahîm who narrated from al-Walîd bin Ziyâdah who narrates from Hizâm bin Hakîm:

Rifâ'ah bin Zuhayr bin Ziyâd bin 'Abîd bin Sarîyah al-Jurhumî ؓ was an expert on 'Arab lineage, history and their kings. He had read the books of the Prophets Hûd ﷺ, Sâlih ﷺ and Hanzhalah ﷺ. After his speech the Patriarch desired to make him helpless with a question.

Patriarch : O you of high thoughts and genius, how do hearts reach the spiritual intellect and rise to the unseen angelic world and through self-exercise become purified of dirt? They attain enlightened thoughts through purifying the character which is limited by the limitations of human thought and the physical body. After the separation of the dirt the soul live eternally, not to be destroyed. The souls intermingle and pure ones float with pure ones, while filthy ones sink to filthy ones. Explain all this.

Rifâ'ah ؓ : O Patriarch, you have not spoken correctly.

Patriarch : And why not?

Rifâ'ah ؓ : How can your hearts recognise the Knower of the unseen when the correct way is hidden from your hearts? How can the pure be cleansed of the filth without education about their Disbelief? How can your thoughts attain the hidden mysteries when you are so deluded? Fears seize you, you have no resolution, thoughts hardly survive after the starting point. The forms separate from each other through personal desire and fall upon these desires from their high place. O Patriarch, this is the wisdom of the 'Arabs which you claim to be alien to the character and is

not to be sold in their markets. One of the kings of Yaman, Sayf bin Thî Yazin, who predicted the coming of our Prophet ﷺ, would speak on the mysterious wisdoms and on gratitude for bounties.

One of our eloquent men, Qays bin Sâ'idah, has said:

ألا إننا من معشر سبقت لهم   أياد من الحسنى فعوفوا من الجهلِ
ولم ينظروا يومًا إلى ذات محرم   ولا عرفوا إلا التقية في الفعل
وفينا من التوحيد والفعل شاهد   عرفناه والتوحيد يعرف بالعقل
نعاين ما فوق السماء جميعها   معاينة الأشخاص بالجوهر المجلي
ونعلم ما كنا ومن أين بدؤنا   وما نحن بالتصوير في عالم الشكل
وإنا وإن كنا على مركز الثرى   فأرواحنا في عالم النور تستجلي
وما صعدت كي تستريح وإنما   حقيقة ممثول وجلت عن المثل

We are such a tribe who have taken precedence
in all good things and avoid ignorance.
A forbidden woman they will never see
and fear of Allâh in very deed there be.
We have Tawheed [Monotheism] and deeds amongst us are found,
We recognise Tawheed through logic most sound.
We recognise all that is above the sky
just as someone recognises a jewel that is shiny.
We know what and where we were when we had no form.
Even if we are on Earth residing
Our souls are in the world of Light shining.
Therefore they ascended up on high
and found that free of forms is reality.

Abû Sa'îd narrates from Shaybah bin Abî 'Abdillâh bin 'Îsâ who narrates from Luqyah bin Hind who narrates from 'Abdullâh bin Rabî'ah:

I said to Rifâ'ah bin Zuhayr once he was freed from Roman captivity, "O uncle, how did you and the Patriarch understand each other?"

Rifâ'ah ﷺ : O my son, I never met anyone from amongst the accursed ones who was more eloquent in 'Arabic than him. I asked Yûqannâ about that and he said, "Did you not know that the Romans would not have been able to maintain their empire if the princes and patricians had not learned 'Arabic?"

When Rifâ'ah ﷺ narrated the debate to the Muslims many wrote it down.

20) 'Âmir becomes a Christian

Rifâ'ah ﷺ had an ignorant son who was in captivity with him. He was inclined towards Disbelief and Rifâ'ah ﷺ would make du'â against this. When the prisoners came to the cathedral and his father engaged the Patriarch in debate, the boy stared at the cathedral, its beauty, its statues, its crosses. He began pondering over the beauty of the Roman women. He suddenly kissed a cross and ascribed partners to Allâh.

When Rifâ'ah ﷺ saw this he began crying and said, "Be destroyed! Do you choose Disbelief after Belief? Woe unto you! You have been evicted from the gate of the Most Merciful. Woe unto you! You reject the Most Just King? O rejected monkey! O distant from Allâh's presence! O my son, I will not weep at your separation. You travel one road and I another. You will go to the abode of devils and be resurrected with monks and acolytes. You will be in the sixth level of Hell while I will go with Muhammad ﷺ to the abode of friendly souls. O my son, do not hanker after the worldly life! O my son, do not choose its lusts over the Hereafter. Do not humiliate me through your actions when I stand in front of the Honourable Healer. O my son, you have disgraced your father's old age by denying the Knower of secrets and whisperings. O my son! My hopes in you have been dashed. O my son, does your heart feel at ease to be cut off from Muhammad ﷺ the Chosen One? O my son, who will you ask to intercede for you on the Day of Judgement? O my son, life has deceived you into denying the All-Knowing. O my son, you have left real pleasure for wretchedness. O my son, do you not fear the punishment of blazing Hell? Will you not be shy in front of Ahmad ﷺ on the Day of Judgement? Do you not know that your father is grieved at your disbelief? Where can you escape to when Allâh calls you on the Great Day and says, 'O My slave, you denied the One and Only!' O my

son, you will have a despicable life while your father maintains a life of honour. O my boy, I ask you in the name of the time when I showed so much affection to you when you were drinking milk and then were weaned, will you not return to Him Who covers you completely?"

'Âmir replied, "Your boy has locked the door and pulled down the curtain."

The Patriarch thereupon ordered him to be untied and baptised. The priests and the acolytes then burned incense around him and dressed him in the robes of patricians and princes. The patriarch gave him a horse, slave-girl and mansion. He attached him to Jabalah's army and said, "The rest of you, what stops you from entering our religion as your friend did?"

Muslims : The correctness of our Dîn and the firmness of our conviction stops us. We will not change our religion even if you kill us.

Patriarch : Christ rejects you from His door and sends you far from Him!

Rifâ'ah ﷺ : Allâh knows which of us are the rejected ones and which are far from the mercy of their Rabb.

Heraclius : O 'Arabs, we have heard that your Khalîfah wears patched rags when he has indescribable things from our wealth. Why does he not dress like a king?

Rifâ'ah ﷺ : His desire for the Hereafter and his fear of the King of Kings prevents him from that.

Heraclius : What does his court look like?

Rifâ'ah ﷺ : It is built of mud and has no chamberlains. Instead, it is filled with the poor.

Heraclius : What is his carpet like?

Rifâ'ah ﷺ : It is justice and helping others.

Heraclius : What is his throne like?

Rifâ'ah ﷺ : It is intelligence and conviction.

Heraclius : What is his royal dress like?

Rifâ'ah ﷺ : It is ascetism and piety.

Heraclius : What is his treasure-house like?

Rifâ'ah ﷺ : It reliance upon the Rabb of all the worlds.

Heraclius : Who are his soldiers?

Rifâ'ah ﷺ : Those who take Allâh to be One. O Caesar! Do you not know that his men said to him, "O 'Umar, you now have the wealth of the Caesars, the patricians and the emperors of Persia, so why do you not wear good clothing?"

He replied, "You are desirous of apparent worldly beauty while I desire the Rabb of this world and the next."

The herald of power* then referred to 'Umar ﷺ by proclaiming:

ٱلَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّـٰهُمْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا۟ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتَوُا۟ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَأَمَرُوا۟
بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا۟ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ....

Those who if We establish them over the Earth establish Salâh; pay Zakâh; order the good; forbid the evil... [22:41]

**(It is unclear if this is meant to be literal or figurative; a human or an angel - translator's note)*

21) The fall of Iron Bridge

Heraclius ordered the Muslims to be locked up in a cell in the cathedral. He then left to inspect his tent and found several tents belonging to the patricians erected around his. Small but highly decorated wooden chapels were placed facing each tent. The chapels had gongs at the entrances. The Romans would rest in these movable structures and take them with them on their travels and marches.

Heraclius inspected the entire camp and was intending to return when suddenly a group of horsemen came galloping to him.

Courtiers and chamberlains : What do you people want?

Horsemen : The 'Arabs have seized Iron Bridge.

Heraclius now felt certain that his empire was coming to an end and said, "How could they capture the bridge and towers when there are 300 patricians stationed there?"

Horsmen : O Caesar, the commanding officer himself handed it over to them.

It was but Allâh's favour to the Muslims that Caeasar's officer would daily inspect the bridge and the two towers and order the men to be alert. One day he found the men drinking wine instead of guarding the bridge. He began beating them and would have killed the commander had it not been for his fear of Heraclius.

When Yûqannâ came to assess the situation he found that they all hated Caesar's inspector. He questioned them but they refused to answer at first.

Yûqannâ : Tell me what you are planning?

Guards : First guarantee us that we can trust you.

He managed to win their confidence.

Guards : We are going to give the bridge to the 'Arabs.

Yûqannâ : And what do you want?

Guards : All we want is for the Muslims to give us indemnity.

Yûqannâ : I will write to the commander to indemnify you, but if you embrace their religion it will be better for you.

Guards : How is that possible when you yourself embraced their religion and then left it?

Yûqannâ : I seek Allâh's protection! I came to trick them into giving Antioch to the 'Arabs.

Guards : For now we will only give them the bridge.

They kept the conspiracy secret until the Muslims arrived. The commander secretly went to the Muslims. He gave them Yûqannâ's letter and requested indemnity for himself and his men. The Muslims rejoiced at capturing the bridge without any fighting and granted the indemnity. When they reached the gates the commander opened them and the Muslims entered. When Heraclius heard of this he put the Romans on full battle alert.

Yâsir bin 'Abdira<u>h</u>mân narrates from Manâzil bin Nazzâf a<u>s</u>-<u>S</u>aydalânî who was the most knowledgeable man on the conquest of Syria:

When the Muslims marched on Antioch Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ said to Khâlid, "O Abû Sulaymân, we have reached Antioch, the city of the dog of Rome. Soon his army will be coming. What is your opinion?"

Khâlid ﷺ : Allâh Most High says:

وَأَعِدُّوا۟ لَهُم مَّا ٱسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن قُوَّةٍ....

And prepare what power you can against them. [8:60]

So order your men to prepare and put the splendour of Islâm and the power of faith on display. Each general, one after the other, should take his force out on parade.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ agreed and first sent Sa'îd bin Zayd ﷺ, one of the ten who were given tidings of Jannah by Rasûlullâh ﷺ. He commanded 3,000 horsemen of the Muhâjirîn and the An<u>s</u>âr and they formed the vanguard. Then Râfi' bin 'Umayrah came with 1,000, then Maysarah bin Masrûq with 3,000, then Khâlid ﷺ with the elite troops. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ followed with the remaining troops. With him were 'Amr bin Ma'dikarab az-Zubaydî, <u>Th</u>ul Kalâ' al-<u>H</u>imyarî, 'Abdura<u>h</u>mân bin Abî Bakr, 'Abdullâh bin 'Umar, Abân bin 'Uthmân bin 'Affân, al-Fa<u>d</u>l bin al-'Abbâs, Abû Sufyân <u>S</u>akhr bin <u>H</u>arb, Râshid bin <u>D</u>amrah, Sa'îd bin Râfi', Zayd bin 'Amr and other such chiefs.

They were in turn followed by those women whose men were in Roman captivity. These included Khawlah bint al-Azwar, Mazrû'ah bint 'Amlûq and Umm Abân bint 'Utbah. The saddest of them all was Khawlah. Amongst the tear-inducing poems she recited at the time of her brother's captivity was this one:

أيعد أخي يلذ الغمض عيني   فكيف ينام مقروح الجفونِ
سابكي ما حييت على شقيق   أعز علي من عيني اليمين
فلو أني لحقت به قتيلا   لهان علي إذ هو غير هون
وكنت إلى السلو أرى طريقًا   وأعلق منه بالحبل المتين
وإنا معشر من مات منا   فليس يموت موت المستكين
وإني أن يقال مضى ضرار   لباكية بمنسجم هتون

Can my bleary eyes find pleasure after my brother?
How do my moist lashes find sleep?
I will weep over my brother as long as I live
Who is more to me than my own right eye.
If I find him dead
I will be relieved that he is not disgraced.
If I see a way to solace
I will tie a firm rope to it
We are a people of whom some have died
But none die in humiliation.
If it is said, "Dirâr is gone!"
I will be a showering cloud of tears.
They said, "How much you weep!" I said, "Respite!"
"I will cry until my aorta snaps."

22) Another assassination attempt on 'Umar ﷺ

The Romans were in their tents when they heard a shout that the 'Arabs were coming. They quickly mounted their horses and got into formation. The first general they saw was Sa'îd bin Zayd ﷺ, coming with his flag. He was followed by al-Musayyib bin Najîyah, then Maysarah bin Masrûq, then Khâlid ﷺ and finally Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. Each general halted with his men.

When Heraclius saw them coming he appointed the great warrior, Nastarius son of Romel, to supervise the army while he entered al-Qaysân Cathedral. There he gathered all the princes, patricians, courtiers and chamberlains to address them.

Heraclius : O people of the Christian faith! O sons of noble water, the time is near for what I have been warning you about - the end of your empire and honour in Syria. I have warned you but you did not accept and wanted to kill me. These people are now entering your headquarters and destroying your honour, so defend your women, wealth and lives. Beware of cowardice in battle. I used up all my wealth, treasure and men to defend my religion and your empire and received no wealth or benefit from you. Now if you become cowardly and fail to draw the sword of resolve against the

'Arabs you will be disgraced. Where are your sons and forefathers? They died nobly and now the disgraceful 'Arabs inhabit their homes. Your cathedrals have become great masjids. They have destroyed your churches and monasteries, lowered your princes, enslaved your sons and women, taken possession of your castles and rule your forts and cities. What has passed has passed, so now fight! How many nations before you were prepared to die in defence of their country and women?

In my wisdom I had proposed to you to reach an agreement with the 'Arabs, but you refused. This is because the darkness of your ignorance extinguished the light of your wisdom. Do you not know that a stone tablet was found on the grave of Timawun the disciple of Afanius? It was inscribed thus, "Wisdom is the ladder to the highest world. He who is deprived thereof is deprived of the nearness of his Creator. Wisdom is the life of hearts, the desire of minds, the beauty of life, the light of intellect. He who is not wise remains sick. He who plans will see. He who sees understands. He who understands acts. He who acts has his mind opened up for him. He whose mind is opened purifies himself."

Jabalah : O Caesar, the way to fight these 'Arabs is to fight their Khalîfah in al-Madînah. If you send a Ghassânî to kill him they will lose heart and Syria will be liberated from their clutches.

Heraclius : I have little hope in this because all life-spans are predetermined. However, what you say pleases me so continue.

Jabalah said to his tribesman, Wâthiq bin Musâfir al-Ghassânî, who was very brave and would be in the forefront of battle, "Go to Yathrib and kill 'Umar. If you achieve that I will give you however much money you want."

Wâthiq left and entered al-al-Madînah at night. In the morning 'Umar ﷺ led the people in S̲alâtul Fajr, made du'â and then went outside al-Madînah in the hope of receiving news from the Mujâhidîn in Syria. Wâthiq overtook him and hid in a tree-top in the garden of Ibn ad-Dah̲dâh̲ al-Ans̲ârî. He hid himself in the branches.

'Umar ﷺ returned when the ground heated up and entered the garden unaccompanied. He then fell asleep in its shade. Wâthiq unsheathed his dagger, but when he wanted to climb down a lion as large as a big cow suddenly appeared. It encircled 'Umar and sat at his feet, licking them. It remained there until he awoke. Wâthiq climbed down, kissed his hand and said, "O 'Umar, you are just, so you are safe. By my father! By God! You are he who is protected against all the universe, whom the beasts guard, whom the angels speak of and whom the Jinn know."

He then narrated the whole incident to him and embraced Islâm.

Some have narrated this story as occurring before the Muslims came to Antioch.

(In Part 2: Hims, the assassin is Talî'ah bin Mârân. This would indicate that this same incident occured twice - translator's note)

23) Dâmis is captured

Ubayy narrates from Hassân who narrates from as-Suddî who narrates from Yahyâ al-Wâqidî who narrates from Shahr bin 'Abbâs al-Bayrûtî that 'Umar mentioned to him of the Muslim arrival in Antioch:

Heraclius exorted his people in the cathedral of al-Qaysân and asked them to pledge not to flee even at the cost of having their blood spilled. They pledged this and went with him to the camp. Crosses were raised and the priests and monks were reciting. A great noise was raised by the people of disbelief and transgression. They then got into battle formation.

The Muslims had already formed their ranks. Each general stood at his station and the flags and banners had already been distributed. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ pointed at Rabî'ah bin Ma'mar, the highly eloquent poet who never spoke except in rhymed verses. He said to him, "O Rabî'ah, aim the arrows of your words. Exhort the Mujâhidîn to battle the Polytheists."

Rabî'ah went before the Muslim ranks and had such a loud voice that both near and far could hear him:

O people, until when will you be given this respite to attack? The birds of souls have resolved to break away from the cages of physical bodies and to find rest with their Creator. They have answered that herald who speaks to us with hints, "What is the meaning of this delay in sacrificing your lives?"

Do you flee due to love of temporary life and dear ones? This is your moment of victory, but you run after the beauty of this departing world. The preachers have been truthful in narrating the unconditional truth:

أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِككُّمُ ٱلْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُّشَيَّدَةٍ ....

Death will reach you wherever you are even if it be in fortified towers. [4:78]

This is the rising of our star of fortune and the sprouting of our tree of hope. May Allâh be praised at those whose flowers of love bloom in the skies of their flags; whose dawn of love has broken out in the sky; whose suns of recognition glitter in the easts of their love. They were those who when they went to attack they formed rows and geared themselves for the pleasure of the Pure King. They raced each other and attacked without mercy. Their pure intentions are described thus:

مِّنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا۟ ....

Amongst the Believers are men who showed themselves to be true ... [33:23]

Zayd bin Ismâ'îl as-Sâigh narrates Ja'far bin 'Awn who narrates from 'Ayyâsh bin Abân who narrates from Jâbir bin 'Aws:

I was amongst the troops of Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ when Rabî'ah bin Ma'mar exhorted us with his rhymed speech.

The first Roman to challenge the Muslims was their champion, Nastarus, who resembled an iron tower. When he reached the centre of the field he issued his challenge which was taken up by Dâmis, the conqueror of Aleppo's fort and the slave of Banû Tarîf. The two attacked each other, then at the height of the battle Dâmis's horse slipped and he fell flat on his back. Nastarus pounced on him and captured him. He dragged him in humiliation to the Roman camp and then returned to the battle.

24) Dâmis escapes

Dahhâk bin Hâssân at-Tâî then came against him. Dahhâk greatly resembled Khâlid ﷺ in fighting style and agility so when they attacked each other a Roman who had seen Khâlid ﷺ fighting in other battles said, "This is the great horseman of the Muslims who conquered our cities."

Everyone came to have a glance at the man they thought to be Khâlid ﷺ. In the great rush that resulted, the cables of Nastarus's canopy snapped and his throne toppled. His slaves feared that if he saw this he would kill them. They had no-one to help them

erect the canopy since everyone had gone to cheer Nastarus. Two of the three of them therefore agreed to free Dâmis and said to him, "We will untie you so that you can help us lift the pillars of this canopy. We will then retie you. When the patrician returns we will intercede with him on your behalf to release you."

When Dâmis said, "Yes," they untied him. As soon as he was loose he grabbed each one with one hand and smashed their heads together, killing them. He then attacked and killed the third.

Dâmis found a box. He opened it and found Nastarus's clothing therein. He dressed in it and took a dagger and sword. He then mounted a tall horse and made his way to the Christian 'Arabs with his face veiled. He reached Hâzim bin 'Abd Yaghûth, Jabalah's cousin. Hâzim was in command of the 'Arabs because Jabalah, his son and other cousins had joined Caesar's personal retinue.

Nastarus and Dahhâk continued duelling each other until both of their horses were wounded and could not bear their riders any longer. The two therefore separated. Nastarus went to his tent to rest but found that the canopy had collapsed and the slaves were dead. Dâmis was missing. He realised that Dâmis was to blame. He went to Heraclius and said, "By Christ! These 'Arabs are nothing but devils."

When the army heard what Dâmis had done they became nervous. Heraclius then said, "He must still be in the camp because we did not see him leaving. He must be hiding amongst the 'Arabs where he can blend in most easily."

When Dâmis saw the commotion he had caused, he drew his sword and beheaded Hâzim with a single blow. The Christian 'Arabs were thrown into confusion and Allâh witheld their hands from Dâmis. He therefore had time to slacken the reins of his horse and gallop off to the Muslims who raised shouts of, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" at his appearance. He went straight to report to Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ who said, "May your hands never be crippled."

Jabalah was enraged at the murder of his cousin and went to Caesar. He kissed the ground before him and said, "O Great One of Rome, I cannot be patient any longer. We have to attack these people who have exceeded all limits and forgotten their lowly station."

Heraclius was about to issue the order to attack when a group of horsemen arrived.

Heraclius : What news do you have?

Horsemen : O Caesar, Falantius, son of Satanius son of Aramunia, prince of al-Madâin and Great Rûmîyah, has come to your assistance.

25) The prophecies of Great Rûmîyah

Great Rûmîyah was named after his grandfather, Aramunia. At Great Rûmîyah there was a large shrine, Abû Sarfiyâ. In it they kept a copper statue covered in gold. The shrine had seven gold doors. At each door was a round altar on which sat a human statue holding gold tablets in its hand. Each year a tablet would be taken to the shrine and made to face the sun. The soothsayer would then look at the tablet and predict what would happen in the region related to that particular tablet, each tablet representing one of the seven regions. A similar process took place at each of the altars and by means of this ceremony started by their ancient sages, the people of the city would learn of the events of the world.

In the centre of the seven altars was a dome resting on eight brass pillars covered with gold. Enclosed within was a wall speckled white and black. The wall had a huge door above which was a black stone statue. During the olive season a frightening voice would emit from the statue and it could be heard east and west. So terrifying was this sound that hearts would be close to bursting. The next day starlings would arrive carrying three olives each - one in their beaks and two in their claws. They would drop the olives on the statue until the entire place was covered in olives. The people would extract the oil from the olives and eat for a full year.

In the centre of the shrine was a locked room which had never been opened since the city was built. When Falantius intended coming to Heraclius's aid he was short of funds for his army. He therefore wanted to open the room to see what was inside. His officials and Atmius, the shrine-keeper, said to him, "O prince, this room has been locked for 700 years, 170 years before the coming of Christ*. None of your ancestors ever interfered with it. All the custodians of the shrine would leave instructions that it should never be opened. It was built through some secret wisdom of the sages and kings. This room and the city was built by your ancestor, Aramunia son of Qatawius, who I believe ruled for 300 years. He instructed his son who also ruled for 300 years not to open it. He, your father, left the same instruction to you. You have now ruled for 100 years, do not destroy the wisdom of your ancestors."

**(700 years before the coming of the Sahâbah ﷺ is 70 BC not 170 BC - translator's note)*

Falantius insisted and opened the room. In it he found a map of Baytul Muqaddas and the other cities of Syria. There was also a description of all the kings. At the end was a statue of Litan who was in fact Heraclius. The statue of Heraclius stared at a tablet inscribed in Greek: *O seeker of Knowledge! Read abundantly for whenever a point is revised it becomes more embedded in the heart of the listener and is more likely to be implemented. Knowledge is attained through the mind of logic. It is attained through much exercise. Knowledge is the tool of planning and planning is where knowledge is placed. These words are complete for all forms of knowledge. We have looked into the wisdoms and mysteries and have found that when the cloud of confusion rains its misguidance upon Earth the Lamp of Guidance will shine in the lowlands of western 'Arabia and will dispel the darkness of ignorance from all senses and call people to his religion, to monotheism of the Creator, the Most Beautiful. He will sweep aside all other religions and empires. His mission will reach mountains and plains. Once his light has penetrated every dense place he will return to the spiritual realm. After him a slender man will rule. His heart will be filled with the light of Truth and its laws but woe to Syria for what the reddish man after him will unleash on her! He will destroy the Empire of Caesar. He will be heavy set and his sitting will be as if he is ready to jump. Justice is his description. Truth is his virtue. His robe is patched. His whip suffices as a sword for him. During his reign empires will fall and change. When he will conquer this room, which was formed with wisdom and protected through blessings, then congratulations to he who has wisdom firm in his heart; whose essence shines with the lamp of wisdom; who recognises and follows the Truth; and avoids and opposes falsehood.*

Falantius was amazed at what he read and said to Atmius, "O Compassionate father, what do you say about this?"

Atmius : Sire, what can I say about such wisdom which the great ones compiled and the sages knew. Knowledge is joined to intrinsic information with the light of intellect. If I look at the greatest empire, that of Heraclius, then all the pillars of his empire have been demolished in Syria. The Empire shifted from Rome to Constantinople just as the sage, Mahrius, predicted in his book, "Jewels of Wisdom." He also stated in it, "The light of a pure orphan will shine from the mountains of Paran.* Minds will be cleared through the light of his wisdom. The thick darkness of the sky will be dispelled through his resolve. He will gently call the people and lead them through their crises. He will triumph over the very horizon. Woe to Jerusalem from his companion who wears the cloak of awe and the crown of intelligence; the conqueror of the Earth; the humiliator of kings. During his time the Cross will be shattered; the temples will be no more; the altars will be pulled down; baptism water

will vanish. There will be no escaping him except by following his law - the orphan's law."

('Arabia - this same word is used in the Bible - translator's note)*

26) Falantius comes to Antioch

Falantius concealed whatever he heard from the custodian and thought, "I must go and see these 'Arabs but I will still have to go and help Heraclius because the Patriarch wrote to me threatening to excommunicate me if I fail to defend the faith of Christ."

He then selected 30,000 of his Georgian troops and appointed his son, Staflius, in his place. He took out the banners of Alexander the Macedonian which were woven with gold and pearls and were the same ones he had unfurled the day he had conquered the oasis of Bâliyûs. Normally they would not be unfurled except in the Sofia Cathedral on Palm Sunday every year.

Falantius then left with the unfurled banners above him until he reached Antioch and camped at the Persia Gate. Heraclius mounted his horse and came out with his retinue to meet him. He pitched his tent opposite Heaclius's and the Romans rejoiced, taking this to be an omen of victory. They beat their gongs and made a great noise amongst the armies.

When the Muslims' spies came to inform Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, he raised his hands to the sky and said, "O Allâh, your enemies seek help against us with their great numbers and their numbers increase. Break their unity, destroy their armies, shake their feet and make their days difficult. Make our word most high and their word most low. Help us just as you helped our Prophet ﷺ at the Battle of the Confederates. O Allâh, return their scheme to their own necks and help us against them."

This du'â calmed the Muslims.

Ibrâhîm bin al-'Alâ narrates from Abû Yûsuf al-Kindî who narrates from Abû Ja'far ad-Darâmî who narrates from ar-Rabî' bin Anas who narrates from Ja'far bin Maysarah who narrates from his uncle:

When the prince of Rûmîyah arrived with his army the Muslims became scared, but Allâh kept them firm and Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ sent Mu'âth bin Jabal with 3,000 troops after saying to him, "O Companion of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, the Romans have gathered from

the coastal lands to defend their religion. Go and raid the coast. Look after the Muslims lest you be taken to account because of them."

Mu'âth ﷺ left and raided Jabalah City and al-Lâthiqîyah. He acquired much booty there. At Jabalah's gate he came across 'Inân bin Jurham al-Ghassânî, Jabalah's cousin. He had 1,000 animals loaded with wheat and barley for the army of Disbelief. They had been gathered from Tripoli, Acre, Tyre, Sidon and Caesarea and were being sent by Constantine to his father, Heraclius. When the Christian 'Arabs reached Jabalah City they handed the consignment to Jabalah's cousin and returned. Mu'âth ﷺ now took the entire caravan back to the Muslims.

When the Muslims saw the caravan they raised cries of, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" until Heraclius queried as to why they were shouting. When they informed him he became angry at the loss of the food and said to the patricians, "Nothing remains between us except battle. God will help whoever He wills."

He then ordered the army to prepare for battle and mounted his horse accompanied by the prince of Rûmîyah, the governor of Mar'ash, the governor of Askabândîs Fort, the governor of Tarsus, the governor of Nasîsah, the governor of Qûnîyah, the governor of Mâsir, the governor of Aqsarâ, the governor of Furthest Caesarea, the governor of Qûmât, the governor of Antarânah, the governor of Tabrzand and Jabalah bin al-Ayham.

Yûqannâ came, setting the troops in rows. Once all the princes and patricians were at their stations Falantius went to Heraclius to seek permission to duel. He kissed his saddlebow and said, "O Caesar, I have not left my land and come to serve you from 200 Farsakh (1097.28 km) away, except to please Christ and serve Him before you. All your armies have already fought and striven. Now I wish to duel the followers of Muhammad today and thus heal your heart and my heart."

Heraclius : Stay in your place and do not burn your respect and prestige, the prestige of kings. You became a king before me, so send someone else for the job. You have not experienced the 'Arabs enough to go against them alone.

Falantius : O Caesar, what prestige remains with these people against us? They have disregarded our honour, disgraced the honourable ones of our faith and consider war to be an obligation against our high and low ones. O Caesar! Do you not know that whoever gazes at the world with the eye of love will find that his passion will lead him to fanatical love and attachment to worldly embellishments. Then the thick cloud of ignorance sits on his chest, preventing him from seeing his final destination. However, he who hastens to obey his Creator by abandoning his passions will arise

to the sacred abode in the place of friendliness. When the Ancient and Eternal One saw how forgetful you have become by seeking that which is temporary, he gave the weakest of nations power over you. They evicted you from your homes and exiled you from your lands. This is only due to your perpetual obedience to your base desires. You pass unjust decisions and oppress the citizenry by demanding that which you have no right to. You oppressively seize their wealth and ruin their condition. Adultery, fornication and prostitution is rife. For all these reasons you are never victorious and fall into this cycle of misfortune.

27) Falantius invites his people to Islâm

Sarwand the chamberlain : Your highness, do not fling such words at the heart of Caesar which are above your station. People greater than you have advised him and have been ignored.

Falantius became angry at being rebuked, but kept silent until nightfall. Once a quarter of the night had passed he called his chamberlains and high officials.

Falantius : Does it please you that Heraclius's chamberlain raised his voice at me and insults me in front of all the kings? You know that my dynasty is older than his and that his lineage is lower than mine and that I started ruling before him. The sage, Casius, who is famous for his wisdom, had placed a lighthouse between the lands of the Jarâmiqah and the Anjâr, which lights a distance covered by 12 days' journey. That land is only reached through great effort. He had a huge well dug in the centre of which he placed a great pillar on a rock. Through his engineering feat announcements can be heard all around it and at the same time the well still fills with water. He said, "Do not go to that man who considers you to be lower than him for then you will be made small in front of him. Put your self-honour against his vanity for self-honour combats the vanity of kings. Do not do anything for an undeserving man because he will repay you with evil. Kindness is only shown to decent people and is wasted on lowly and foolish ones - have no concern for them. You may try to benefit him while he only wants his personal desire fulfilled."

We have come hundreds of Farsakh to serve a man who thinks we want his palace and crown and that we are merely his ordinary servants. Intelligence tells me not to follow the dark ignorance of the sense. I therefore refuse to follow it. Honour is magnificent and dishonour is a disaster. I have decided to go to the 'Arabs and investigate their religion which is plainly true and victorious through its honesty. He who is not upon it is in great fear. What do you say?

Officials : O Sire, do you propose to give up your religion, kingdom and honour?

Falantius : They alone have great wisdom because the light of Tawheed cleans their minds and brightens their faith through the blessings of their master who is named in the hidden sciences. The magnetism of his divine wisdom attracted their minds to follow him and to comply with his laws. Whoever desires to go to the Highest World should not sit here on the face of this world. Do you not know that light outshines darkness and that death in reality is the river of life?

Officials : Sire, we will not prevent you from this eternal honour which will take us out of humiliation and the fear of being conquered. If you wish to take us on a road to eternity which removes wretchedness, then very well, truth follows truth and negates falsehood. We are yours and are with you.

Falantius : Then get ready. Tonight we will go riding as if we are on patrol and will then divert to the 'Arabs.

28) Falantius goes to embrace Islâm

Ibn Wahb and Ibn Sâlih narrate from Abû Mûsâ al-Ash'arî ﷺ:

When Falantius decided to go to the Muslims, Yûqannâ arrived with a letter from Heraclius and gave it to him.

Falantius : Who are you from among the courtiers?

Yûqannâ : Yûqannâ, prince of Aleppo.

Falatius : How did you end up leaving your city?

Yûqannâ related to him the whole story

Falantius : How did you find them to be?

Yûqannâ : Sire, I entered their religion and observed them to discover their secrets. I found them to be a nation who do not listen to falsehood; who do not avert from truth. They do not sleep at night but strive in worship. When they speak they never fail to mention their Rabb. They help the wronged one against the oppressor. Their rich and poor are equals. Their rulers dress like poor people. They take the noble and the commoner to be equal.

Falantius : If you see their secret and recognise their virtue, then why do you not stay with them?

Yûqannâ : My religion is correct and I cannot part from my people.

Falantius : When the pure eternal souls see the truth then conviction draws them to the search of sincerity away from a despicable life towards progress to the Highest World.

Yûqannâ left with Falantius's words playing in his mind. He said, "By Allâh! He did not speak a word except that it has become engraved in my heart. His words testify that he accepts Islâm to be correct."

Yûqannâ remained uneasy until he eventually decided to visit Falantius at night. He found him mounting his horse for that secret purpose which has been mentioned. Yûqannâ went before him and kissed him.

Falantius : What veil does God use to cover the wrongdoers from following the road of the pious? Truth is clear to he who desires it and falsehood is hidden from its followers.

Yûqannâ : Sire, what are you hinting at?

Falantius : If you had any insight you would never even have thought of leaving your religion. You desire luxury which will come to an end and only leads its owner to difficulty.

Yûqannâ kept quiet. He left Falantius to go spying around and waited on the road leading to the Muslim camp. Falantius mounted his horse and emerged from his tent to find 4,000 of his clansmen waiting and mounted. They were firmly resolved and united in their quest to reach the Muslims. They had decided to leave their old religion and in so doing, sacrifice their prestige. As they came near the Muslim camp, Yûqannâ and his 200 men appeared before them.

Yûqannâ : Sire, are you going to raid the Muslims?

Falantius : By Eternal Allâh! No, I am going to join their religion and community and be one of them! He who realises that the world is perishable works for the Hereafter. But what prevents you from that which we have already decided on?

Yûqannâ : Sire, truth has pulled you from the road of misguidance.

Yûqannâ then told him the real story of how he intended deceiving the Romans. Falantius kissed him and was pleased with what he said.

Falantius : But how will you accomplish your mission with only these few men with you?

Yûqannâ : O Sire, I have in my house 200 senior Sahâbah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ who are equal to 20,000 Romans. Do not be hasty. Return and send a messenger to inform the commander of the Muslims what we intend doing. Tomorrow you and your men surround Heraclius while I enter the city to free the prisoners and arm them. When the Muslims attack then you and your men should attack Heraclius and his retinue. Try to capture him and that will fulfil your duty of Jihâd. If Allâh wills then the prisoners and I will capture the city. If you wish to return to your land and keep your affairs separate from us then go and appoint one of your reliable clansmen over the army.

Falantius : I have not done this in order to enhance my rule or to rule the world. Once this business is completed I will go to Makkah to perform the pilgrimage and I will visit the grave of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. I will then settle in Baytul Muqaddas until I die. Who should we send as a messenger to the commander to tell him our plan?

Yûqannâ : The Muslims have spies in the Roman camp who are their subjects. I can recognise some of them from my past.

29) Rasûlullâh ﷺ predicts the fall of Antioch

They were speaking under the cover of night when an old man came to them. Yûqannâ looked at him and recognised him as 'Amr bin Umayyah ad-Dumarî, the Zakâh-collector of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. He made salâm to Yûqannâ and his companions and said, "Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ makes du'â that Allâh rewards you well on behalf of Islâm. He saw Rasûlullâh ﷺ in a dream. He informed him about the prince of Rûmîyah and what you two are discussing; about what has happened to his people and what you are planning. He gave the glad-tidings that Allâh had forgiven all his past and future sins and said that Antioch would be conquered and the rule of Rome would disappear from her."

Falantius beamed with joy and exclaimed, "Praise be to Allah Who guided me to Islâm and faith!"

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had seen Rasûlullâh ﷺ in a dream saying, "O Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, glad tidings of Allâh's pleasure and mercy. Tomorrow Antioch will be peacefully conquered."

He informed him about Falantius and said, "He and Yûqannâ are near to you. Command them to proceed with their plan."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ awoke. He narrated the dream to Khâlid ﷺ and sent 'Amr bin Umayyah ﷺ.

When Falantius heard this he got goose pimples. A violent excitement seized him and he exclaimed, "I testify that there is no deity except Allâh! I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh. With firm conviction I testify that this religion is the Truth!"

Falantius's party then returned and encircled Caesar's army as if they were on guard. When Yûqannâ's party left they were even more resolved in their plan to attack Heraclius.

Yûqannâ came across the chief chamberlain coming out of Antioch with the Muslim prisoners. He had decided to kill them and throw their heads at the Muslims the next day. Yûqannâ's whole world came crashing down around him. He said, "O Chief Chamberlain, you know that the battle is going to take place between us tomorrow. If you kill them and throw their heads at the Muslims they will not spare a single one of us. Fear God! Do not be hasty. Leave them with me until Caesar reaches a decision about them."

The chamberlain left them with Yûqannâ and went to inform Heraclius who said, "Leave them with the Lord-Governor."

He returned and said, "Caesar says that you should take them and guard them."

Yûqannâ took them to his tent but was frustrated because his plan to use them to capture Antioch was thwarted. Once they were in the tent he untied and armed them and told them of Falantius's intention to capture Heraclius.

Dirâr ﷺ then said, "By Allâh! I will please my Rabb tomorrow through my Jihâd."

His wounds were completely healed. They had spent eight months in captivity. Yûqannâ then spread the prisoners amongst his clansmen.

Abû Muhammad narrates from Sa'îd bin Abî Maryam who narrates from Yahyâ bin Ayyûb who narrates from 'Abdullâh bin Mas'ûd ﷺ:

Heraclius did not order the prisoners to be taken out. It was one of his special officials, Talis son of Renius, who bore a striking resemblance to him. Heraclius made him wear his crown and belt and said to him, "Stand in my place tomorrow. I wish to trick the 'Arabs and hide from them."

He did this because he dreamt that someone had come from the sky and toppled him from his throne, sending his crown flying from his head. The person said, "What was far off is now near. Your rule in Syria is now over. The empire of wretchedness and hypocrisy is to be replaced with the empire of harmony."

That person then blew on his army, igniting a fire. Heraclius awoke in a fright and interpreted the dream to himself to mean the end of his rule.

Before the arrival of the 'Arabs he had already gathered all his treasure onto ships about which none of his ministers knew anything. He had also prepared water and provisions. After seeing the nightmare he sent his entire household, not leaving a child, woman or any other relative behind. He gave Talis his instructions which have already been mentioned. Once Talis sat on the throne he gave the chamberlain no other instruction except, "Take out the prisoners and behead them."

The chamberlain took them and then Yûqannâ rescued them as has already been mentioned.

Yâsir narrates from Sulaymân bin 'Abdil Wâhid who narrates from Safwân bin Bishr who narrates from 'Urwah bin Math'ûr who narrates from Muhammad bin 'Âlî who narrates from 'Âdî bin Shu'bah who narrates from Qatâdah who narrates from Abû as-Siddîq at-Tâjî who narrates from Ibn Sa'd:

Heraclius left Antioch as a Muslim.* He had secretly written to 'Umar ﷺ, "I have a headache which does not subside. Please send me medicine."

*****(*It is unfortunate that the respected author has chosen to report such narrations which are contrary to the accepted majority view that Heraclius never accepted Islâm - translator's note*)

'Umar ﷺ sent him a qalansuwah which was such that when he wore it, his headache subsided and when he took it off his ache returned." He was astonished at that and

had it opened. Inside was written, *"In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful."*

Heraclius exclaimed, "How noble and honourable is that name if God cured me through it."

(This hardly constitutes evidence that he became Muslim - translator's note)

The cap then became an heirloom until it reached the governor of Amorium. When the 'Abbâsî king al-Mu'tasim came to Amorium he suffered from a severe headache. The governor therefore sent the qalansuwah to him. Once he put it on the headache disappeared. He ordered it to be opened and found a piece of cloth therein upon which was written, " *In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*"

30) The Battle of Antioch

In the morning Talis mounted his horse and put the Roman army into battle-array. The Imperial retinue hovered around him, thinking him to be Heraclius. Falantius and his men circled the Imperial retinue while Yûqannâ and his men also came riding in disguise.

The first to attack was Khâlid ﷺ with his elite force. Sa'îd bin Zayd ﷺ followed him; then Qays bin Hubayrah; then Maysarah; then 'Abdurahmân bin Abî Bakr ﷺ; then Thul Kalâ' al-Himyarî ﷺ and so on. The people followed each other, one group after the other.

Once the battle was in full swing Yûqannâ and his men attacked the Christians. Praise be to Allâh for Dirâr ﷺ! He fulfilled the right of the sword and extracted revenge from the Romans. Every time he killed a Roman he shouted, "Revenge for imprisoning Dirâr bin al-Azwar!"

He, his men and Rifâ'ah bin Zuhayr aimed for the Christian 'Arab army. Rifâ'ah shouted, "Take revenge against those who imprisoned you. Attack! Beware of cowardice. Know that the gates of Jannah are open, its women and palaces decorated, its buildings glittering, its serving boys exulting, its judge is manifest. O 'Arab youth, who amongst you desire to marry the women of Jannah? Sacrificing your lives is the dowry of he who wants a bride in Jannah and he will have the boys serving him. Who desires that which the Judge-King describes:

مُتَّكِـِٔينَ عَلَىٰ رَفْرَفٍ خُضْرٍ وَعَبْقَرِيٍّ حِسَانٍ

Reclining on green cushions and rich beautiful mattresses.
[55:76]

Where are those who participated in Badr and Hunayn with the chief of both worlds? Where are those whose hearts have been purified of forgetfulness and dirt? Join those who desire the Eternal Abode and tie your camels at the gate of He Whose beloved ones never die. He desired that they should reach their rightful places and that they should increase in good deeds so He removed the veils and they saw an abode whose buildings are of light and foundations are of mercy; its bricks are gold and its cement is musk; its water is the water of life; its pebbles are pearls and jewels; its sand is camphor and ambergris; its walls are Magnificence and Delight; its curtains are nobility; its trees are Lâ ilâha illallâh; their branches are Muhammadur Rasûlullâh ﷺ; their fruits are Subhânallâh! Alhamdu lillâh! Allâh is Most Pure! Praise be to Allâh! its extent is that of Heaven and Earth; its ceiling is the Throne of the Most Merciful.

When they witnessed all this and wanted to reside therein it was said to them that they would never reach it except through sacrificing their lives for the Holy King.

Then He dressed them in the robe of kindness and crowned them with the crown of pleasure. He unfurled the banner of forgiveness over their heads, embroidered with the words of their secret:

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا۟ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ أَمْوَٰتًۢا ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَآءٌ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ

Do not consider those slain in the Path of Allâh as dead. They are alive with their Rabb receiving sustenance. [3:169]

They have indeed spent their lives in attaining the pleasure of the Most Holy."

Dirâr ؓ attacked the enemies and made them drink the drink of destruction. He came across a rider smashing the battalions apart and shouting, "Vengeance for Dirâr!"

He saw that it was Khawlah, so he shouted, "Turn around, O Bint al-Azwar. By Allâh! I am your brother."

She turned to make salâm to him.

Dirâr ﷺ: Leave me now. This is not the time for salâm. Fighting the Disbelievers is better than your words, O Bint al-Azwar. Keep your bridle with mine and your spear-point with mine and wage Jihâd in the Path of Allâh. If one of us is killed then we will meet at the Pond of Rasûlullâh ﷺ in the Plains of Resurrection.

31) Victory

While they were speaking Dirâr ﷺ saw the armies of Rome turn and flee. This was because when Falantius had seen that the fire of battle was stoked and its smoke rising, he and his men attacked Talis thinking him to be Heraclius. Someone began shouting, "Falantius of Rûmîyah has betrayed and captured Caesar."

Thereupon the Romans fled and the Muslims killed them in such numbers that only the tolls of Ajnâdayn and al-Yarmûk are comparable. The dead from the Christian 'Arabs alone amounted to 12,000.

The Muslims then began searching for Jabalah and his son but found no trace of them. 500 chiefs of the Christian 'Arabs had sailed off with Heraclius including Jabalah, his son, his cousin Qarzhah, 'Urwah bin Wâthiq, Murhif bin Wâthiq, Hijâm bin Sâlim and Shaybân bin Murrah. They settled down on the islands where they continued their Christian progeny.

The Muslims took the canopies, tents, brocade, goods and treasure, captured 30,000 prisoners and killed 70,000 Romans while the Christian 'Arabs fled. Some fled to the mountain-passes while others fled to Constantine at Caesarea.

After the battle the booty was gathered before Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. He fell into prostration out of gratitude to Allâh while the Muslims made salâm to each other. When the parties of Dirâr ﷺ, Yûqannâ and Falantius arrived they made salâm to the Muslims who rejoiced at seeing them. The Muslims said to Falantius, "We have heard our Prophet ﷺ saying that when the noble one of a people comes to you, you should honour him." Falantius observed their good character, humility and abundant worship and remarked, "By Allâh! These are the people about whom 'Isâ had foretold."

Every single one of his clansmen embraced Islâm and waged Jihâd until all the cities were conquered. Thereafter Falantius went to perform the Hajj in Makkah and went to visit the tomb of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. When he came to make salâm to 'Umar ؓ, the Khalîfah jumped up to shake his hands as did all the Muslims. Falantius then settled down in Baytul Muqaddas where he worshipped Allâh until his death.

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ saw that the Antioch garrison had fortified themselves in the city while the Muslims were not fortified. He made du'â, "O Allâh, make a way for us to conquer her. Make it a clear victory."

A patrician, Salib son of Marcus, commanded the Romans. He was an ignorant man who resolved to defend Antioch from within the walls.

32) The conquest of Antioch

That night the city leaders gathered around the Patriarch and said, "Go to the 'Arabs and obtain whatever terms you can."

He spoke to Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ who accepted his request. A fine of 300,000 Mithqâl of gold (1312.2 kg) was imposed on Antioch. Once the treaty was concluded Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ said to him, "Vow that you will not betray us, because your city is in impenetrable, mountainous and rough land."

Khâlid ؓ :Who will minister the oath?

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ : Yûqannâ.

Yûqannâ put the Patriarch's hand on the Patriarch's head and then placed his own hand above that.

Yûqannâ : Say, "By God!" forty times and then say, "If I betray you then I will cut my sacred cord and smash my cross. The priests and monks will curse me. I will leave the religion of Christianity. I will slaughter camels in the basin of baptism water and pollute it with the urine of Jewish babies and I will kill all who are present there. I will tear up the robes of Mary* and tie them as a turban on my head. I will slaughter the priests and the dye the dresses of brides with their blood. I will thus imply that Mary was an adulteress. I will place the menstrual cloths of Jewesses on the altar. I will extinguish the lamp of the Cathedral of Sergius. I will marry a Jewess who never cleans herself from menstruation. I will wash my robes on Friday mornings. I will demolish all the cathedrals and churches. I will worship the divine and deny the human god. I will eat camel meat on Palm Sunday. I will fast the whole

month of Ramadân in a state of thirst. I will gnaw the flesh of monks. I will pray in the robes of a Jew. I will say that Jesus was a skin-tanner." Then also say, "We will not betray you and are with you."

**(Islâm respects Mariam ﷺ [Mary]. Yûqannâ intended to make breaking the oath difficult for the Patriarch - translator's note.)*

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ entered Antioch on 5 Sha'bân 17 Hijrî. In front of him were the flags that Abû Bakr had tied for him. Khâlid ﷺ was on his right and Maysarah bin Masrûq on his left. Ahead of him were the Qurân-reciters reciting Sûrah al-Fath (the Chapter of Victory). They proceeded until they reached the Gate of Gardens. There he sketched out the boundaries of a Masjid which he ordered to be built and which is still in existence today.

Maysarah bin Masrûq narrates:

We saw the city to be a prosperous one with a pleasant climate and abundant clean water. The Muslims took a liking to the city and wished to rest there for a month but Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ did not allow us to remain there for even three days. He wrote to 'Umar ﷺ:

> *Salâm 'alayka*
>
> *I praise Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity. I convey salutations upon his prophet Muhammad. I thank Him for the victory, booty and help He bestowed upon us.*
>
> *O Commander of the Believers! I am informing you that Allâh Most Honourable and Majestic has conquered for us the centre of Christianity, Antioch. Allâh broke their army and helped us against them. Heraclius fled via the sea.*
>
> *I did not remain in the city because its climate is so pleasant that I feared that love of the world would overcome the hearts of the Muslims and make them disobedient to their Rabb. I am taking the army back to Aleppo where I will be awaiting your command. I will obey whether you order me to cross the mountain-passes or to remain here.*

O Commander of the Believers! The 'Arabs are looking at the daughters of Rome who ask them to marry them. I have forbidden them from accepting because I fear a tribulation unless Allâh grants protection. Please hasten to reply.

Salâm upon you and all the Muslims.

Abû 'Ubaydah ✽ folded and sealed the letter and said, "O Muslims, who will take my letter to the Commander of the Believers?"

Zayd bin Wahb was the slave of 'Umayr bin Sa'îd who was the freed-slave of 'Amr bin 'Awf. He hastily replied, "O commander, I will deliver it to him if Allâh wills."

Abû 'Ubaydah ✽ replied, "O Zayd, you are a slave and are not at liberty to do as you please. You will have to ask your master for permission."

Zayd hastened to 'Umayr, bent down and kissed his hand from which 'Umayr forbade him. He was an ascetic who longed for the life to come. He owned nothing of this world except his sword, spear, horse, camel, baggage, large bowl and plate. He would only take enough from his share of the booty to live on. He saved nothing and distributed the rest of his share amongst relations and others. If anything still remained he would send it to 'Umar ✽ to spend on the poor Muhâjirîn and Ansâr ✽.

'Umayr : What do you want?

Zayd : O Master, permit me to be the Muslims' messenger of glad tidings to 'Umar ✽.

'Umayr : If I forbid you from this wish I will be a great sinner. Go, I set you free for the sake of Allâh. I hope that through my freeing you Allâh will free me from Hell.

Zayd was delighted. He returned to Abû 'Ubaydah ✽ and said, "Through the blessings of your letter I have been set free."

Abû 'Ubaydah ✽ too was happy and gave him a fast camel from Yaman. He mounted it and took the quickest route to al-Madînah.

33) 'Umar's ✽ instructions

Zayd narrates:

There was a great deal of shouting and people were running towards al-Baqî' and Qubâ. I said to myself, "Something must be happening!" and followed them to see

what was happening. I thought that they were going to battle when I saw a man whom I recognised. When I made salâm to him he recognised me.

Man : Is that you, Zayd?

Zayd : Yes.

Man : Allâhu Akbar! O Zayd, what news do you have?

Zayd : Glad tidings of booty and victory. What is the Commander of the Believers doing?

Man : He is setting out to perform the Hajj and is accompanied by the wives of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. The people have gone to bid him farewell.

So I made my camel sit and tied it. I ran until I stood in front of 'Umar ﷺ who was on foot. Behind him his slave was leading his camel loaded with his provisions, bowl, gear and Indian corn. The litters were in front of him; 'Alî ﷺ at his right; al-'Abbâs ﷺ on his left; and the Muhâjirîn ﷺ and the Ansâr ﷺ behind him. He was leaving them instructions with regard to al-Madînah.

I said, "As-salâmu 'alayka, O Commander of the Believers. I am Zayd bin Wahb, the freed-slave of 'Umayr bin Sa'îd. I have brought you glad tidings.

'Umar ﷺ : May Allâh give you good news too. What is your news?

Zayd : This is the letter of your governor, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, informing you that Allâh conquerd Antioch at his hands.

'Umar fell into prostration to Allâh, rubbing his cheeks in the dust. He then raised his dust-covered face and said, "O Allâh, praise and thanks be to You for Your all-encompassing bounty...Bring the letter. May Allâh have mercy on you."

When I gave him the letter he read it and cried.

'Alî ﷺ : Why are you crying?

'Umar ﷺ : Because Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ regards the Muslims to be weak.

..إِنَّ ٱلنَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌۢ بِٱلسُّوٓءِ ....

Verily the ego orders towards evil. [12:53]

He then gave the letter to 'Alî ﵁ who read it out to the Muslims. I then saw 'Umar's ﵁ crying cease. He turned to me in joy and said, "O Zayd, when you return to Antioch enjoy her figs and apples to the full and praise Allâh excessively."

"O Commander of the Believers," I replied, "This is not the season!"

He then sat down on the ground and called for an ink-pot and paper and wrote as follows to Abû 'Ubaydah ﵁:

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

From : Allâh's slave, 'Umar

To : His governor over Syria, Abû 'Ubaydah 'Âmir bin al-Jarrâh

Salâm 'alayka

I praise Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity. I convey salutations upon His Prophet. I thank Him for the victory He granted to the Muslims; for giving the outcome in favour of the pious; and for remaining constantly affectionate and helpful towards us.

You claim to leave Antioch because of her pleasantness, but Allâh has not forbidden the pleasant things unto the Believers. He says,

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلرُّسُلُ كُلُوا۟ مِنَ ٱلطَّيِّبَـٰتِ وَٱعْمَلُوا۟ صَـٰلِحًا ...

O Messengers! Eat of the pure pleasant things and perform pious acts. [23:51]

O you who believe! Eat of the pure pleasant things which We have provided you with and be grateful to Allâh.[2:172]

It was therefore compulsory upon you to let the Muslims rest from their fatigue. You had to leave them to eat well and rest their bodies from the tiredness of battle against those who deny Allâh.

As for my order which you are waiting for - go behind the enemy and conquer the mountain-passes. You are present while I am absent. The present sees that which the absent does not see. You are present by the enemy and your spies bring you intelligence. If you see that for the Muslims to cross the passes is the correct thing to do, then enter their territory and make all roads narrow for them. Grant terms to whoever seeks a treaty with you and fulfil them to the best of your ablility.

As for the 'Arabs who want to marry Roman women - permit them only if they have no family back in al-Hijâz. Allow anyone to buy slave-girls because that will protect their chastity.

I instruct you to generously spend on Falantius, prince of Rûmîyah, and his men. He has given up his family and power.

Peace be upon you and all the Muslims.

He folded the letter and gave it to me, saying, "May Allâh have mercy on you! Go and make 'Umar your partner in divine reward."

I took the letter and was about to depart when he said, "Wait until 'Umar supplies you with some of his food."

He made his camel sit and gave me one Sâ' (3.2 or 2.1 kg) of dates and one Sâ' of sawîq cereal, saying, "O Zayd, excuse 'Umar for this is all he can spare."

Then when he kissed my head I wept and said, "O Commander of the Believers, it is above my station to be kissed by you when you are the Commander of the Believers, a Sahâbî of the master of all Messengers and through you Allâh completed the number of Muslims at forty."

He wept and said, "I can but hope that Allâh will forgive me through your testimony."

As I mounted my she-camel I heard him saying, "O Allâh, let him mount with safety. Fold up the distances for him. Make the near distances easy for him. Verily You have power over everything."

I was delighted at his du'â for me. I knew that his du'â was never rejected because he was obedient to his Rabb and followed His Prophet ﷺ. I travelled the Earth which folded up beneath the hooves of my mount until (and swear this by Allâh!) I reached Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ on the third day. He had left Antioch and was camped at Hâzim. As I reached the Muslim camp I heard a great deal of noise so I asked a man from Yaman, "What is the cause of this?"

"Joy at the victories Allâh has granted to the Muslims," he replied.

Al-Wâqidî narrates:

Khâlid ﷺ had gone raiding right to the banks of the Euphrates. The people of Manbij, Bazâ'ah and Bâlis surrendered in exchange for returning their men and wealth. Thus he conquered those three places as well as Fort Najm during the middle ten days of Muharram 18 Hijrî. After he returned their wealth they surrendered and paid a fine of 150,000 Dînâr and the governor, Garfanius, fled to Roman territory with his wealth, slaves and horsemen.

Khâlid ﷺ appointed 'Abbâd bin Râfi' at-Tamîmî over Manbij; Najm bin Mafrah over al-Jisr; 'Aws bin Khâlid ar-Raba'î over Bazâ'ah and Bâdir bin 'Awf al-Himyarî over Bâlis. Bâdir built a fort to the east of Bâlis and named it, Bâdir, after himself. Khâlid returned with all that wealth on the day Zayd returned.

34) Do we cross the mountain-passes?

Zayd bin Wahb narrates:

I went to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who was sitting with Khâlid ﷺ at his side. Khâlid ﷺ had brought the money which the Romans had surrendered to him. I made my camel sit, made salâm to them and gave the letter to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. He tore it open and read it out to the Muslims. He then said, "O Muslims, the Commander of the Believers has given me the option of crossing the mountain-passes because he says that I am

present while he is absent. Since I do not decide anything without consulting with you I now ask for your advice. May Allâh have mercy on you."

Nobody replied so he repeated his question. They still remained silent, so he said, "O Muslims, you now rule this land of Syria which Allâh has granted to you. He has expelled your enemy therefrom in humiliation and made you the inheritors of the land and buildings as he promised in His Honoured Book. What do you advise me with? Do we cross the mountain-passes into enemy territory?"

They still remained silent so he repeated his question and said, "What is this silence for? Have you become cowards after having been brave or have you become lazy after having been energetic? Or have you become so pure that not a trace of sin remains on you and you have accumulated so much virtue that no mistake remains against you? It should then be expected that Allâh will help you in Jihâd which is better for you than the world and all it contains."

Maysarah bin Masrûq : O commander, we do not remain silent out of cowardice but await someone else to reply out of mutual respect. We have no other business except for Jihâd against Allâh's enemies. We are here before you. It is for you to order us and for us to obey Allâh, His Rasûl ﷺ and you. I can only speak for myself and not others. Send me wherever you please, you will find me to be obedient.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : Whoever wishes to express an opinion should do so.

Khâlid ﷺ : O commander, staying back from the enemy is just plain weakness from our side. If we go after them we will obtain booty. Victory is of course from Allâh. I suggest that you send armies through every single mountain-pass. This will weaken the enemy and comfort the Muslims.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : May Allâh reward you well, Abû Sulaymân. I want to tie a flag for Maysarah and despatch him with an army because he hastened to this matter and pointed it out. May Allâh open up the passes for them so that they can raid the nearby lands and return to tell us about the territory. We can then act upon their news.

Khâlid ﷺ : That is correct.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ tied the flag for Maysarah and chose 3,000 horsemen for him from mixed tribes and 1,000 black slaves. He appointed a leader over each tribe and Dâmis over the slaves.

They armed themselves heavily, each one saying that he was enough to take on an entire squadron on his own. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ then said to Dâmis, "O Abû al-Ḥawl,

your group will form the vanguard. Do not oppose Maysarah in anything he may tell you because he is a blessed scout."

"I hear and obey," replied Dâmis.

As the army began its preparations, Khâlid ﷺ said, "O commander, send guides with them to show them the way and spy on their enemies."

The Christian allies of Aleppo were asked to volunteer guides who would act for the good of the Muslims. The Aleppans chose four of them whom Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ rewarded. He acted kindly towards them and commuted their Jizyah. He then asked them, "Which pass should the Muslims cross to get to their enemy?"

They all agreed on entering the largest pass through the land of Qurâs and said, "O commander, these passes are nothing like the lands you have conquered. They are icy cold, dense with trees and filled with stones and mud. There are many valleys, gorges, glens, passes and caves."

The Yamanîs retorted, "You simply go ahead of us. You will see us performing amazing feats."

Dâmis then left with the guides in front of him and Maysarah behind him. They bade the people farewell and left reciting the Qurân and "Lâ ilaha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" the Muslims made du'â for their safety and victory.

35) Beyond the mountains

'Atâ bin Ja'îdah narrates:

We followed the guides until we reached Handas Pass. We crossed it going in the direction of as-Sâjûr until we reached Qûras where we camped for the night. In the morning we entered the main pass and found the land to be rough and filled with trees. Much water flowed and it was such a restricted area that a horseman could find no place to manoeuvre. We became frightened at the dreariness of the land which an 'Arab would find to be too cramped.

I thought, "If these valleys end up being long then I fear that the enemy will overpower the Muslims."

The guides continued ahead of the Muslims and now reached high mountains which were difficult to climb. Everyone had to dismount and go on foot. We walked until

our sandals fell apart and our feet bled. We remained in that state for three days while the guides said, "Be alert. If the crossing overpowers you you will be destroyed."

On the fourth day we finally reached an open space. We had entered the Roman territory in the beginning of summer and were therefore lightly dressed. The new land was bitterly cold and the mountains to the left and right were covered in snow. Dâmis had no warm clothing and was being affected by the cold. I asked him, "O Abû al-Hawl, why are you shivering?"

"I am getting cold," he replied, "and do not have anything with me to keep me warm."

I gave him a piece of fur which he wore. Once he warmed up he said, "May Allâh dress you in the garments of Jannah."

We continued until we reached a pleasant land with abundant water and few trees. We did not see anyone there because the Romans had emigrated out of fear of the Muslims. When we saw a village on the fifth day we went towards it. We saw that it was uninhabited but could hear chickens and sheep. We entered the village without finding any defender or obstruction and realised that the people must have run away from us. Maysarah shouted, "They must have fled from us."

The Muslims entered the village and took whatever food, furniture and goods that were there.

Sa'îd bin 'Âmir narrates:

I saw Abû al-Hawl carrying three bundles and two sheets on his shoulders so I asked him, "What is this, Abû al-Hawl?"

"I am preparing for the cold of this disgusting land which I will never forget," he replied.

The Muslims took all the food and fodder of the village and continued the journey until they reached a meadow called Meadow of the Tribes. It was spacious and we let the horses loose to gallop. The army camped there, but Maysarah began thinking of returning to Aleppo because Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had ordered him not to tarry and to remain on guard.

36) The Roman army

Whilst the Muslims were in this state a horseman appeared with a prisoner.

Maysarah : Where did you get him from?

Horseman : O commander, I went ahead of my companions when I saw someone sometimes visible and then disappearing. I rushed and caught this man whom I have brought to you.

An allied Christian went to question the prisoner. They spoke to him for a long time while the Muslims remained quiet. When the conversation dragged on longer Maysarah snapped, "Woe unto you! What is he saying?"

Ally : O commander, he says that when Heraclius fled from Antioch via the sea and reached Constantinople, the Roman refugees and others went to him. When he heard that Antioch had peacefully been conquered and that his warriors had been killed he took it very badly and wept saying, "O land of Syria, peace be upon you until the day of meeting."

He then said to the patricians and chamberlains who had gathered around him, "I fear that the 'Arabs will come after me."

He then sent 30,000 troops under three patricians to defend the passes for him.

Maysarah : Ask him what the distance is now between us and them.

Ally : He says, "Two Farsakh (11km)."

Maysarah looked to the ground and kept silent. 'Abdullâh bin Huthâfah ﷺ of the Sahm clan was a great warrior who fought only with an iron-spear. He was very sharp-tongued.

'Abdullâh ﷺ : O commander, why do I see you staring at the ground like a horse with its bridle rattling? Each one of us can face 1,000 Romans.

Maysarah : By Allâh! I did not look down out of fright or fear, but out of concern at what might befall the Muslims under my banner especially since this is the first banner to cross the passes. 'Umar will blame me and every shepherd is responsible for his flock.

Muslims : By Allâh! We are not concerned by death and do not worry over that which is not attained because we have sold our lives for the Jannah of our Rabb. He who knows that he is to leave the temporary abode for the Permanent Abode will not be concerned at the treatment he receives at the hands of the Disbelievers.

Maysarah : O people, should we fight them here or should we advance upon them?

Muslims : If their position is in a more spacious area than this then we should go.

They consulted the ally who said, "From here to Amorium there is no place wider than this. If you have decided to fight them then remain in this place, but if you withdraw before your enemy comes it will be much better for you."

Maysarah then presented the prisoner with Islâm. When he refused he beheaded him. At that moment the Romans appeared like a swarm of locusts. They lit fires because the day had already passed.

37) The Battle of Meadow of the Tribes

In the morning Maysarah led the Muslims in S̲alâtul Fajr and then stood to address them: O people, this is your day which will never be repeated because your banner is the first to cross the passes. Know that your brothers compete with you in good deeds. Know that the world is an abode through which one merely passes while the Hereafter is the abode of permanence. Listen to what our Prophet ﷺ said, "Jannah lies beneath the shadow of swords."

Do not look at the great numbers of your enemy and conclude in your thoughts that you are as good as dead. Allâh Most High says:

...كَم مِّن فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ مَعَ ٱلصَّـٰبِرِينَ

How many a small group overcame a big force with Allâh's leave? And Allâh is with the patient ones. [2:249]

The Muslims replied, "O Maysarah, ride with us and confront them with Allâh's blessings. We hope for Allâh's help against them."

Maysarah was pleased with this reply and so they all mounted their horses. The slaves separated and stood under Dâmis's banner. They took it upon themselves to fight the enemy and sought Allâh's help.

Maysarah gave the Muslims instructions. He put 'Abdullâh bin H̲ut̲h̲âfah as-Sahmî ؓ over the right-wing and Sa'd bin Abî Sa'îd al-H̲anafî over the left-wing. The slaves advanced under Dâmis without uttering a word. The Romans mounted and stretched out their three rows which consisted of 10,000 men each. They held their crosses in front of them and had come out in force, fully equipped. Once they were in proper

formation an 'Arab Christian emerged from their ranks. He approached the Muslims and said, "The wrong of the unjust destroys him. Was Syria not enough for you to conquer that you now stretch out over the mountains? But this time your deaths have overtaken you. Here are 30,000 horsemen all of whom have sworn on the Cross not to flee even if it means death. If you wish for us to spare you then surrender yourselves into captivity so that Caesar may decide what to do with you."

Dâmis emerged with the banner in his hand and said, "You have spoken the truth in saying that the wrong of the unjust destroys him. As for you saying that we should turn ourselves over to you to spare ourselves, that makes you unjust for speaking without experience on your part. Here I am, a mere slave out of the slaves of the 'Arabs. I have no value amongst the people of rank. Come near so that I can bring you down and make you languish in your own blood."

Damis then spurred his horse towards him, speared him and brought him off his horse, dead. He then roamed around on his horse, waving his flag and saying, "Allâhu Akbar! Allâh has conquered and helped and brought us triumph."

The Romans were enraged at Dâmis for killing their champion. Another one came towards him. Before he could even get close Dâmis speared him through his upper chest and took his spear out from the Roman's back. The Romans saw this and said, "A mere slave out of the slaves of the 'Arabs has done this" and were too frightened to come out against him. Dâmis therefore advanced, killing one of them from the centre of the army and then started returning. An entire row of Romans, that is 10,000 men, charged at him. The slaves and then the rest of the Muslims responded in turn and the two armies clashed.

38) Dâmis is captured and freed

Maysarah narrates:

May Allâh be praised for the slaves. They truly proved themselves and saved Dâmis from the brink of destruction. They were saying, "We are the slaves of the slaves of Allâh. We strike like lightning and kill those who deny Allâh."

The battle continued until the sun reached the centre of the dome of the sky at which point the two armies separated due to the heat. The Muslims were expecting victory while the Romans were expecting their own destruction. 900 of them had been captured and about 1,000 killed. However, when the two forces separated the Muslims could not find Dâmis. Maysarah than said, "If Abû al-Hawl has been killed

or captured then this is a severe affliction upon us. I complain to Allâh about his loss."

Ten Muslims had been captured so Maysarah asked, "Who will go and investigate their condition?" but at that moment the entire Roman army launched a most violent attack. Ten to fifty of them would join forces against a single Muslim until they either killed or captured him. They managed this because they were 30,000 while the Muslims were only 4,000. The battle intensified with the striking of spears and swords.

May Allâh be praised for Maysarah! He waged Jihâd as it should be waged and called out, "O people, remember the Hereafter. Know that it is closer to you than the return to your family. Welcome it just as a mother welcomes her son and do not turn your backs to it. I fear that what they inflict upon us is due to our own weakness. Break your scabbards because this is the only way to salvation."

Zayd bin Wahb narrates:

Every Muslim threw his scabbard away. When the Romans saw what we did they imitated us. That battle has two names - "Battle of the Meadow of Tribes" and "Battle of the Smashing" due to the smashing of scabbards. The two sides fought until a man would say that his sword could no longer cut. The Muslims called unto Allâh for relief while the Christians called out their words of disbelief. The Africans were ready to fight to the death and called out, "Through the intercession of Muhammad." The battle-cry of the 'Arabs was, "Help! Help!"

Ibn Thâbit narrates:

I was seized with anxiety about the condition of the Muslims. We were in a tight situation when I heard a terrifying shout come from the enemy side. I saw them fighting people who had appeared in the middle of their army and were making the frightening noise. The sound increased and then I heard someone shouting, "Lâ ilâha illallâh Muhammadur Rasûlullâh!"

I said, "These are the voices of angels," and followed the voice to find that it was none other than Dâmis Abû al-Hawl. He was behind his shield and was accompanied by the ten who had also been captured. They fought together and defended each other until they escaped from the midst of the Roman army. I heard Dâmis recite:

يوثقني الأعداء في الحديد وناصري وسيدي المبيدِ
مهلك عاد وبني ثمود أغاثني بعونه الشديد
محمد الطاهر الرشيد فحلّ عني القيد والحديد
ذاك رسول الملك المجيد صلّى عليه الناصر الحميد

The enemy bound me in iron
but my helper and master is most destructive.
I swear that just as certainly that 'Âd and Thamûd have been
destroyed he helped with his strong help.
Muhammad the pure guided one freed me from the chains and
iron.
He is the Messenger of the Magnificent King,
May the salutations of the
Most Praiseworthy Helper be on him.

The Muslims attacked so violently it was as if the fleeing Romans had drowned in their own blood. By Allâh! The Muslim dead were at most fifty-two while more than 3,000 Romans were killed, excluding those killed by Dâmis and company in the centre of the army. When Maysarah saw Dâmis he wanted to come walking to him, but Dâmis prevented him on oath.

When the two armies separated Maysarah pressed him to his chest, kissed him between the eyes and asked, "What happened to you?"

Dâmis : O commander, the Romans ganged up against my horse and killed it. When I fell down they took me prisoner and tied me and my companions in chains. We gave up hope of ourselves. At night I saw Rasûlullâh ﷺ in a dream who said to me, "Do not worry Dâmis. My position with Allâh is great."

He then rubbed his noble hand on the chains which fell off me. He did the same to the others and said to us, "Glad tidings of Allâh's help. I am your Prophet, Muhammad Rasûlullâh."

He then said to me, "Convey my salâm to Maysarah and tell him that may Allâh reward him well."

He then disappeared and I awoke. Our guards were sleeping due to exhaustion and they had flung their weapons aside. We took the weapons and killed them. We then attacked the Romans and were aided by Allâh through the blessings of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. We killed as many as we could and then came safely out from amongst them.

This narration caused the Muslims to raise shouts of, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!"

39) Romans are reinforced

When the Roman commander, Garis, saw what had befallen his men he said, "By God! That Empire which you defend has lost. If you do not fight firmly and vigorously I will kill you myself."

The Romans vowed not to flee, but to fight to the death. Garis then ordered fires to be lit on the mountain heights and sent a party to take the prisoners to the cities. 20,000 Romans then came from all directions to assist him, but this did not perturb the Muslims.

In the morning Maysarah led the Muslims in Salâtul Fajr in the manner of Salâtul Khawf. He was the first to pray in this way beyond the passes and his banner was the first to cross the passes. After the Salâh he stood to address the Muslims. After praising Allâh and conveying salutations upon Rasûlullâh ﷺ he said, "O people, be firm despite what is befalling you. Patience can only be practised at the time of hardship. It shows that Allâh's mercy is upon us because we are surrounded by the enemy but we fight with Allâh's help. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had commanded me not to take you far away whereas we are now seven days' journey away from them and Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ does not know that we have confronted an army."

Sa'îd bin Zayd ﷺ : O Maysarah, what do you intend with these words? If you are encouraging us then we are already more desirous of meeting Allâh than a thirsty man is desirous of cold water.

Maysarah : I wanted your suggestions. I was thinking that we should send a man to inform the commander-in-chief what is happening to us and that the enemy have increased. He should therefore reinforce us with our brothers.

Sa'îd ﷺ : An excellent suggestion!

Maysarah then called one of the four allied Christians and promised him every good thing if he would take someone with him and tell Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, "The enemy

have come against us from every fort, town and village and are now facing us." He also had to report to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ whatever he saw. The two left and pressed hard in their journey taking known roads. When they reached the Muslim camp they fell unconscious like two old mules due to exhaustion.

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ ordered water to be sprinkled on them. When they were revived he asked, "What happened? Has the expedition been destroyed?"

"No," they replied, "but the enemy have come against them from every place."

They then informed him of the battle, the breaking of the scabbards, the capture of Dâmis, his escape and the current situation. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ became most anxious and hurriedly stood up. He went to Khâlid's ﷺ tent to find him tending to his armour. When Khâlid ﷺ saw him he stood up and said, "O commander, all is well, is it not?"

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ took him by the hand and went with him to his tent. There he told the two men, "Stand and narrate what you have seen."

They repeated their report.

Khâlid ﷺ : Allâh Most Pure and High has not abandoned us since He helped us and praise be to Him for that. He ordered us to be patient at the time of difficulties and has said:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ ٱصْبِرُوا۟ وَصَابِرُوا۟ وَرَابِطُوا۟

O you who believe! Be patient, assist one another with patience and defend each other. [3:200]

...إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ مَعَ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ

Verily Allâh is with the patient ones. [2:153]

As far as I am concerned I have already said that I dedicate myself to waging Jihâd in the Path of Allâh and am not miserly with my life towards Allâh and His Rasûl ﷺ. Perhaps Allâh will save me from Hell and bless me with martyrdom.

He rushed back to his tent; donned his upper-body armour and blessed qalansuwah and mounted his horse. A call to arms was made and the people came to him from all

sides. If Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ had not stopped them they would have all gone with him. 3,000 to be followed by another 2,000 were selected to go.

Ahmad bin Hishâm narrates from Iyâd who narrates from his sources:

As Khâlid ﷺ departed to aid Maysarah he lifted his hands to the sky and prayed, "O Allâh, make a way for us to them. Fold up the long distances. Ease every difficulty for us."

He then set out for the mountain-passes.

40) Capture of 'Abdullâh bin Huthâfah ﷺ

Maysarah and his men were being confronted by the Romans in intense daily battles and they would only separate at night. The Romans received reinforcements daily while the Muslims suffered from fatigue and wounds but did not lose heart. It was as if they were a people whom Allâh had veiled from death.

'Umar bin Râshid narrates from az-Zubaydî:

When Khâlid departed to reinforce Maysarah across the passes Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ fell into prostration for a long time saying, "O Allâh, I beseech you through the intercession of him whose name You put with Your own name and whose status You have made above that of Your other Prophets and Messengers. I ask that You fold up the lengthy distances for them, that You ease for them every difficulty and that You join them up with their companions. O You Who are near! O You Who accepts du'â!"

At that time Maysarah was awaiting relief and help from Allâh.

'Abdullâh bin al-Walid al-Ansârî narrates from Thâbit bin 'Ijlân who narrates from Sulaymân bin 'Âmir al-Ansârî:

I was with Maysarah in the Battle of the Meadow of the Tribes when we smashed the scabbards and when the Romans came swarming from all sides while we were resting and anticipating battle. One day a patrician came out of their ranks. He was wearing double armour and iron on his forearms. A helmet glittered on his head. On top of it was a jewelled cross. He carried a spear as large as a camel's leg. He came between the two armies challenging us to duel him. He was in fact one of the three generals of the original 30,000 and was issuing his challenge in his barbaric tongue.

Maysarah asked the translator, "What is this uncircumcised one saying?"

Translator : He says that he is a great horseman and desires to fight your brave warriors.

Maysarah called out, "Who will go and fight him?"

A Muslim from the tribe of Nakha' rushed forward. He wore the clothing and armour of the Romans. We said, "He was an 'Arab Christian before he embraced Islâm."

The Roman began talking to him, thinking that the Nakha'î could understand him but when he saw that he did not respond, he attacked. He thrust at him with his spear which the Muslim dodged. It missed him and struck his horse's head instead. The horse then fell down with its rider. When the Nakha'î sprang to his feet Maysarah called out, "O Nakha'î brother, return."

He ran back with the patrician in pursuit.

'Abdullâh bin Huthâfah as-Sahmî ﷺ then came charging and screaming at the patrician. The Roman became confused and turned towards him, giving the Nakha'î time to reach the Muslim camp. 'Abdullâh ﷺ then attacked the Christian who responded to his attack. The duel between them was a difficult one. None of 'Abdullâh's ﷺ strikes achieved anything because the Roman managed to deflect them all with his shield. However, the heavy spear was weakening his arm. The duel dragged on until at one point they both struck simultaneously. 'Abdullâh ﷺ was slightly faster. He struck below the jaw, brought his sword down on the Roman's neck and sent his head flying from his body. When the Roman's horse started returning to the Roman camp 'Abdullâh ﷺ grabbed it as well as the spoils and returned to the Muslim camp. The Romans were greatly affected since the patrician was highly esteemed by them and especially by Heraclius.

Another patrician then came forward saying, "Caesar's companion has been murdered. I will most certainly avenge him. I will either kill his murderer or send him to Caesar to do with him as he pleases."

He then approached the headless body and began sobbing. He said in a fluent tongue, "O 'Arabs, there is no doubt that God will soon destroy you for oppressing us. Let the murderer of this man come and duel with me so that I may take revenge on him."

'Abdullâh ﷺ wanted to go but Maysarah forbade him out of compassion and ordered him to rest. Maysarah wanted to accept the challenge.

'Abdullâh ﵁ : O commander, they challenge me by name. If I stay behind I will appear weak.

Maysarah : I have pity on your tiredness.

'Abdullâh ﵁ : You pity me because of my worldly tiredness but you do not have pity on me burning in Hell? I swear that I and none other shall go for the duel.

He then went riding on the horse of his victim. He wore no protection besides his upper-body armour and carried his sword and his shield in his hands. When the Roman saw him riding his friend's horse he charged. 'Abdullâh ﵁ defended himself but found his foe to be as solid as a mountain who came crashing down on him. The Roman grabbed him, pulled him towards him and took him as a prisoner. He took him back to his camp and ordered, "Chain him and load him onto the postal horse to be sent to Caesar immediately."

This was done.

41) The Romans sneak off

The patrician again came onto the battlefield, proud at his achievement. Three different Muslims wanted to fight him, but Maysarah said, "*I* will fight this cursed one."

He then called Sa'îd bin 'Amr bin Nufayl ﵁. He gave him the flag and said, "Guard the flag so that I can go to fight this accursed one. If I return I will take it back." If not, then my reward is from Allâh."

Sa'îd took the flag while Maysarah left, reciting this poem:

قد علم المهيمن الجبار　　بأن قلبي قد كُوِيَ بالنار
على الفتى القائم بالاسحار　　سيعلم العلج أخو الأشرار
أني منه آخذ بالثار

The protecting and healing One knows
That my heart is seared with fire
At the boy who was still standing here this morning.

The disbelieving brother of evil ones will soon know
That I am taking revenge against him.

Maysarah then attacked. A protracted battle ensued which both found difficult. Sometimes they attacked, sometimes they withdrew. They disappeared from sight under a cloud of dust. Both camps were watching and praying for their man. When they reappeared from the cloud they were slightly closer to each other, but not absolutely together. The Roman then exclaimed, "I swear by your religion! What is that flag which I see coming behind your army? Maysarah ignored this trick and retorted:

وَمَا ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ

And that is not difficult for Allâh. [14:20]

The Roman insisted, "I swear by my religion that I have not said anything to you except the truth."

This was a complete lie. As soon as Maysarah turned around hoping to see the relief coming from Allâh and to verify the Roman's word, the accursed one grabbed his hand to capture him.

Ironically it was at that moment that Khâlid's ﷺ flag was seen, blazing with a light. The Muslims shouted, "Allâhu Akbar!" so loudly in unison that the Roman dropped Maysarah's hand and turned to investigate. Maysarah immediately tried to pull him out of his saddle but failed because he had chained himself to the saddle. He kept pulling unsuccessfully until Khâlid ﷺ came to them. The patrician raised his sword to free himself, but the sword swerved and he cut off his own left hand. He then escaped and fled back to his camp, wailing because of the amputation. His slave-boys came and cauterised him.

Maysarah told Khâlid ﷺ of what had occurred from the Romans and how they had captured Ibn Huthâfah ﷺ. Khâlid was extremely upset and exclaimed, "Verily we belong to Allâh and to Him do we return. Someone like 'Abdullâh bin Huthâfah has been captured? By Allâh! Khâlid will never leave them until he frees them, if Allâh Most High wills."

He then encamped for the night.

The next day an old Roman wearing a monk's black frock came to him. He stood in front of him and intended to prostrate, but he prevented him and asked, "What do you want?"

Monk : The commander wishes to conclude peace with you on condition that you withdraw.

Khâlid ؓ : We will not withdraw until our usual conditions have been met. As for the prisoners, if you do not free them willingly we will free them forcefully.

Monk : Are you the commander?

Khâlid ؓ : Yes.

Monk : Will you agree to a ceasefire for the rest of the day and night so that we may ponder over the matter between us? This will give our commander time for his pain to subside then we can answer your demands.

Khâlid ؓ : We accept.

The monk returned to his people and told the patrician, "They have accepted. The fighting has stopped."

The Muslims then camped directly facing the Romans who began lighting many fires. They then loaded up their goods and fled early in the night.

The next day the Muslims mounted and found no trace of the Romans. They realised that they had fled. Khâlid ؓ regretted that they had managed to escape him and wanted to chase them, but Maysarah stopped him and said, "This is their territory and is rough terrain. The correct thing for us to do is to return to the Muslim army."

The Muslims took whatever the Romans had left behind. They then returned in victory, but regretted the capture of Abdullâh bin Huthâfah as-Sahmî ؓ. When they reached Aleppo Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ met them, pleased at their safe return. When Maysarah told him about 'Abdullâh's ؓ capture he was grief-stricken and said, "O Allâh! Grant him ease and a way out."

42) 'Abdullâh ؓ and Heraclius

Abû 'Ubaydah ؓ wrote to 'Umar ؓ about the expedition beyond the passes and 'Abdullâh's capture. 'Umar ؓ was pleased at the safe return of the Muslims but was grieved at the capture of 'Abdullâh ؓ whom he loved dearly. He said, "I swear that

I will write to Heraclius to send us 'Abdullâh bin Huthâfah. If he refuses I will personally lead armies against him. He then wrote:

> *In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*
>
> *All praise belongs to Allâh Who neither took a wife nor had a son. May Allâh's salutation be upon His Prophet Muhammad, the helped one.*
>
> *From : Allâh's slave, 'Umar bin al-Khattâb, the Commander of the Believers.*
>
> *As soon as my letter reaches you you should send me the prisoner who is with you, 'Abdullâh bin Huthâfah. I hope that you will be guided if you do this. If you refuse I will despatch men against you - and what men! Men for whom neither trade nor buying distract them from the remembrance of Allâh.*
>
> *Peace upon those who follow guidance and fear a destructive end.*

He folded the letter and posted it to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ with instructions that it be sent to Heraclius. When the messenger brought it to Heraclius he asked, "From whom is this letter?"

The messenger replied, "From the Commander of the Believers, the leader of the 'Arabs."

Heraclius read the letter and summoned 'Abdullâh bin Huthâfah ﷺ.

'Abdullâh bin Huthâfah ﷺ narrates:

I entered the presence of Heraclius. He wore a crown and was surrounded by patricians.

Heraclius : Who are you?

'Abdullâh ﷺ : Just a Muslim man from the Quraysh.

Heraclius : Are you family of your prophet?

'Abdullâh ﷺ : No, but we are of the same tribe.

Heraclius : If you will follow our religion I will marry you to a daughter of a patrician and make you one of my special men.

'Abdullâh ﷺ : No! By Allâh besides Whom there is no other deity! I will never depart from the Dîn of Islâm and upon that which Muhammad brought.

Heraclius : Accept our religion and I will give you much wealth, slaves and slave-girls.

'Abdullâh ﷺ : Never. By Allâh! Were you to give me the entire Empire of your nation and all that you own I would still not leave the Dîn of Islâm.

Heraclius : If you do not accept my religion I will kill you in a most evil way.

'Abdullâh ﷺ : I will never accept even if you cut me to pieces. Even if you burn me with fire I will never leave my faith. Do as you please.

Heraclius (angry) : I will release you if just prostrate once to this cross.

'Abdullâh ﷺ : I cannot do that.

Heraclius : Then eat pork and I will free you.

'Abdullâh ﷺ : May Allâh protect me from doing that!

Heraclius : Then drink just a sip of this wine and I will let you go.

'Abdullâh ﷺ : No! By Allâh! I will never drink it.

Heraclius : I swear by my religion that I will force you to eat and drink this.

He then ordered me to be locked in a cell with the pork and wine and said, "He will eat and drink once hunger and thirst grip him."

'Âmir bin Sahl narrates from Yûsuf bin 'Imrân who narrates from Sufyân bin Khâlid who narrates from those upon whom he relies:

Heraclius died of a broken heart shortly after fleeing from Antioch. It is said* that he died as a Muslim and the one that did this to 'Abdullâh ﷺ was actually his son, Nastius, who had been nicknamed Heraclius.

(It is* ***said* *and not* ***proven*** *- translator's note)*

On the fourth day he enquired from his slaves about 'Abdullâh ﷺ.

Slaves : He neither ate nor drank. He is still as he was.

Minister : O Caesar, this is one of their noblemen who do not brook humiliation. Whatever you do to him the Muslims will do to our prisoners who are in their hands.

Heraclius then summoned 'Abdullâh ﷺ.

Heraclius : What did you do to the meat?

'Abdullâh ﷺ : I left it as it is.

Heraclius : What prevents you from eating it?

'Abdullâh ﷺ : Fear of Allah and His Rasûl ﷺ. Also, although it became permissible for me to eat it after three days, I will not allow the godless ones to mock me.

Because of 'Umar's ﷺ letter Heraclius decided to release him and gave him much money and robes. He also gave him many pearls to give to 'Umar ﷺ as a gift. He sent cavalry to escort him to the mountain passes. 'Abdullâh ﷺ travelled to Aleppo where the Muslims rejoiced at his release.

'Abdullâh ﷺ went on to al-Madînah. When 'Umar ﷺ saw him he fell into prostration out of gratitude and congratulated him on his safe return. 'Abdullâh ﷺ narrated the whole incident with Heraclius and presented the pearls. 'Umar ﷺ showed them to the traders who said, "These are priceless. Who gave them to you?"

The Sahâbah ﷺ said, "Take them. May Allâh give you blessings in them."

'Umar ﷺ exclaimed, "Lâ ilâha illallâh Muhammadur Rasûlullâh ﷺ! Perhaps you permit me to take them, but 'Umar has no power if the absent Muslims and those in the wombs of their mothers and those in the backs of their fathers - the descendants of the Muhâjirîn, the Ansâr and the Mujâhidîn in the Path of Allâh - should claim against me on the Day of Judgement."

He then sold the pearls and put the money into the state-treasury.

43) Accidental drinking bout

'Umar bin Sâlim narrates from 'Abdullâh bin Ghânim who narrates from Abû Bakr bin 'Umar who narrates from 'Abdullâh bin 'Abdirrahmân bin 'Abdillâh:

When Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ peacefully conquered Antioch and despatched the expedition of Maysarah bin Masrûq as mentioned, he stayed at Aleppo awaiting the results of 'Amr bin al-'Âs ﷺ who had gone to Caesarea with 5,000 Muslims.

Amongst them was 'Ubâdah bin as-Sâmit, 'Amr bin Rabî'ah, Bilâl bin Hamâmah* and Rabî'ah bin 'Âmir ﷺ.

(Hamâmah was his mother, Ribâh his father - translator's note)

Sabî' bin Damrah al-Harrânî narrates:

I was with 'Amr bin al-'Âs ﷺ when he marched on Caesarea. We entered a village on a very cold day and searched for grapes. At one house we found large bunches of grapes and experienced intense cold because of the grapes. "May Allâh disfigure these accursed ones." I said, "Their land is freezing, their water is chilly and their grapes makes one cold!"

One of the villagers heard me and came to trick me. "O 'Arab brother," he said, "If you find the grapes cold then drink their water."

He then pointed out an earthen jug which a group of Yamanîs and I drank from. We became drunk and swaggered in this state.

'Amr bin al-'Âs ﷺ was informed and he wrote to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ who replied, "The punishment for drinking wine is established. Implement Allâh's punishment and do not fear in this matter the blame of those who blame."

'Amr ﷺ called us and whipped us. His lashing pained me and I said, "By Allâh! I will kill that Disbeliever who showed us the wine which resulted in us drinking and being punished."

So I took my sword and entered the village, searching for him. I went to him as soon as I saw him, but he fled and shouted, "What wrong have I done against you?"

"You showed me that which makes Allâh angry and resulted in my punishment," I said.

"By God!" he wailed, "I did not know that it was forbidden to you."

'Ubâdah bin as-Sâmit ﷺ then called out to me, "O Sabî', beware of killing him. He is under our protection."

I left the Christian alone. He went and returned with olives, walnuts and raisins and said, "Eat these instead. They will warm you."

I ate and found them good. I said, "May Allâh defame you! Where was this before I got lashed?"

44) Everything glorifies Allâh

Sabî' narrates:

'Amr ﷺ marched on until he reached a village called Mahall (in another text "Nakhl"). This news reached Constantine to whom the remnants of his father's army had fled until he had gathered a force of 80,000. He summoned a Christian 'Arab and said to him, "Go and investigate the 'Arab army for me."

The spy went and sat with a group of Yamanîs who were warming themselves by a fire. When he intended leaving, Allâh made his tongue slip and he said, "In the name of the Cross!"

The Yamanîs realised that he was a Christian spy so they pounced on him and killed him. A tumult was raised in the camp which 'Amr ﷺ heard. When he asked, "What is happening?" he was told, "A group of Yamanîs found and killed a Roman spy."

'Amr ﷺ was enraged. He summoned them and said, "How could you kill the spy? Could you not bring him to me for questioning? How many spies were there amongst us who changed to our side because hearts are only in Allâh's Hands, He changes them as he pleases."

He then proclaimed throughout the army, "Whoever finds a stranger or spy should bring him to me."

Constantine realised that the spy's delay meant that he was killed, so he sent another spy. This spy went to observe the Muslims from a high place and returned to inform Constantine that they were 5,000. He also cautioned that they were like savage lions and tearing eagles who consider death to be a gift and life to be a burden.

"By Christ and the Communion!" exclaimed Constantine. "They will have to be fought. Either the goal will be attained or I will die patiently."

He then summoned his chief commander, Baklakoon, and said to him after having selected 10,000 of his elite troops, "Go on reconnaisance with them."

Baklakoon left immediately.

Constantine then gave another cross to his military advisor, Sergius son of Bakoor. He gave him another 10,000 and said, "Go and meet up with your comrade."

Sergius left and the next Constantine came with the remainder of the army after having left 10,000 troops with his paternal cousin, Castius, to protect Caesarea.

Bashshâr bin 'Awf narrates:

We were in the camp when the first patrician arrived with 10,000 men. We estimated the amount and rejoiced saying, "We are 5,000 and the enemy 10,000. Each of us will only have to face two of them.'

Suddenly the second patrician arrived with his 10,000. 'Amr ﷺ then said, "Whoever desires Allâh and the Hereafter should not be scared by their numbers, even if their numbers should increase even more. Jihâd is the most profitable trade. It is most honourable and worthy. Who can be more proud to stand in front of Allâh than he who is killed in His Path between the ranks of the Disbelievers. He will be with Allâh, grazing in the meadows of Jannah. He will receive from Allâh all-encompassing bounties and favours. Allâh Most High says:

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا۟ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ أَمْوَٰتًۢا ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَآءٌ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ
يُرْزَقُونَ فَرِحِينَ بِمَآ ءَاتَىٰهُمُ

Do not consider those who have been killed in Allâh's Path as dead. They are in fact living with their Rabb, receiving sustenance. They are happy at what He gives them. [3:169]

Had you not hurried to kill that spy he could have informed us of this army's coming and its numbers. We could have been prepared and alert, but Allâh's decree cannot be averted."

Amr ﷺ then gathered the Muslim warriors and said to them, "I think that we should sent a message to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ requesting cavalry and infantry reinforcements because this army is massive. O people, who will ride to the commander to inform him of what is happening to us? Perhaps he will reinforce us just as he reinforced Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân when he was besieging Caesarea. Allâh will reward the messenger."

(See appendix E - translator)

Rabi'ah bin 'Âmir : O 'Amr ﷺ, lead us against the enemy and place your trust in Allâh. He Who helped us in many places when we were few will help us today against the rest of the disbelieving nation.

'Amr ﷺ : By Allâh! You have spoken the truth.

'Amr ﷺ then ordered them to get ready to fight the enemy. The Muslims mounted and raised their voices with, "Lâ ilâha illallâh! Allâhu Akbar!" until the very mountains, hills, rock debris, trees, stones and whatever was on the face of the Earth reverberated, "O our Deity! O our Master! We hear voices of Tawheed not Polytheism – voices which do not pollute Tawheed in anyway. We hear the speech of Tawheed and see faces of people who proclaim Your magnificence and praise. O our deity! How pleasant is the hearing of Your mention. Who is there to help us thank you?"

The animals and wild beasts also thanked their Master Who knows their secrets and whisperings, "O You Who gathered the animals in a state that they are pleased with what you gave them, You Who extracted their provisions and pasture, they go forth in the morning in a state of hunger and return in the evening satiated at the door of the Lord and Master. O You Who if a worm should hide beneath the seven Earths You would see it. Were a grain destined to sustain a slave to be in darkness beneath the darkness of the sea You would bring it to that slave. O our Deity, we hear voices which we did not know proclaiming Your unity in this land. You are Most Pure! O You Whose power we cannot forget! O You Whose kindness and virtue does not come to an end."

An unseen voice then proclaimed from the sky, "Many are those who glorify Allâh in the mountains, in shelters below the Earth, in the unpopulated wastelands and in the depths of the water of the overflowing seas."

The Christians were terrified at hearing these voices from the sky. It was as if the Earth and all its inhabitants had replied to the Muslims. Constantine had also arrived and heard them. He glanced at the 'Arab army which appeared to multiply before his eyes and said, "By my faith! When I came they were not that many. They were no more than 5,000, but now their numbers and help are increasing. There is no doubt that God is reinforcing them with angels. What foresight my father had about the 'Arabs. My army does not compare to the million of Bannes the Armenian at al-Yarmûk. I truly regret coming out against them. However, I will soon find a strategy against them."

45) Constantine sends for an envoy

Constantine summoned the bishop of Caesarea who was highly honoured amongst the Christians and said to him, "Go to the 'Arabs and speak to them in a sweet tone.

Tell them that Caesar's son asks that they send their most eloquent and brave man to him who should not be of the low class 'Arabs."

The bishop, wearing a brocade robe with a hood of fur mounted a grey mule. He carried a jewelled cross in his hand. He went to the Muslims and stopped at a distance where they could hear him. He called out, "O 'Arabs, I am a messenger from Caesar's son. He requests that you send to him your most eloquent and brave man. By God! He does not wish to fight you because he is a scholar of religion and has great foresight. He abhors bloodshed, deception and corruption. So do not aggress against us. The aggressor is always defeated while his victim comes out victorious. Christ has instructed us that we do not fight anyone except for the aggressor against us. The prince now wishes you to send your most eloquent and brave man to him."

When he completed his speech 'Amr ﷺ said, "O people, you have heard what this uncircumcised one has said. Who amongst you will speak to the prince of Rome and in so doing rush to the pleasure of Allâh and His Rasûl ﷺ?"

Bilâl bin Hamâmah who used to give the athân for Rasûlullâh ﷺ came forward. He was a tall, loud-voiced, black freed-slave who resembled a glittering palm tree. His eyes blazed like two coals as if they were free of his sockets.

Bilâl ﷺ : O 'Amr, I will go to him."

'Amr ﷺ : O Bilâl! You are still grief-stricken at the loss of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. Also, you are an African, not an 'Arab. 'Arabic has a large vocabulary, it rhymes and is eloquent.

Bilâl ﷺ : I ask you for the sake of Rasûlullâh ﷺ to let me go.

'Amr ﷺ : You have asked me in the great name of a sacred person. Do not be scared when speaking to him. Be eloquent in your answers and glorify the laws of Allâh.

Bilâl ﷺ : If Allâh wills you will see me as you want me to be.

Bilâl ﷺ was as tall as a palm and had shoulders like the Shanûah tribesmen. His large physique was enough to frighten any onlookers. That day he was wearing a shirt of white Syrian cotton and a woollen turban. He strapped his sword, carried his equipment on his shoulders and held his staff in his hand. The bishop disliked the sight of him and said, "They trifle with us. We call them to speak to them and they send a slave to us because they consider us to be petty. O slave, go and tell your master that we wish to speak to one of your leaders."

Bilâl ﷺ : O priest, I am Bilâl the freed-slave. I used to call the athân for Rasûlullâh ﷺ. I am capable of answering your master.

Bishop : Stay here until I inform the prince about you.

He returned to Constantine and said, "O prince, they have sent one of their slaves to speak to you. This is only because they look down upon us. He is after all, a black slave."

Constantine sent this message to Bilâl ﷺ, "O slave, tell your master that the prince wishes to speak to one of your leaders."

Bilâl ﷺ retorted, "O man, I am Bilâl bin Hamâmah and am capable of answering your master."

The messenger informed Constantine who said, "Tell him to return and say that the prince of Christianity asks if they really consider it worthy of him to speak to a mere slave."

The translator returned to Bilâl ﷺ and said, "O black one, the prince says to you that we do not speak to slaves. The commander of your army or one of his deputies should come to us."

Disappointed, Bilâl ﷺ returned to 'Amr ﷺ and informed him. 'Amr ﷺ turned to Shurahbîl ﷺ and said, "I will go myself."

Shurahbîl ﷺ : O slave of Allâh, if you go then who will look after the Muslims?

'Amr ﷺ : Allâh is most lenient towards His slaves and is most merciful on those who show mercy to His creatures. Take the flag and represent me amongst my people. If the Romans act treacherously then Allâh remains over you.

Shurahbîl ﷺ took the flag while the armoured 'Amr ﷺ went to the Romans. He wore above his armour a long outer woollen garment with an open front and wide sleeves. On his head he wore a yellow-dyed Yamanî made turban and let the tail hang loose. He had tied his belt and strapped both his sword and spear to him. When Constantine's translator saw him he burst out laughing.

'Amr ﷺ : Why are you laughing at me, Christian brother?

Translator : You look so inferior. Also, you carry weapons! What are you going to do with them when we do not intend fighting?

'Amr ﷺ : Carrying weapons is the mark of the 'Arab and his wealth without which he does not go anywhere. I deliberately carry these weapons to show others. If I should meet an enemy then I can defend myself.

Translator : No, treachery is the characteristic of you 'Arabs. You can be at ease with us.

The translator went to inform Constantine of what 'Amr ﷺ had said, "O prince, the commander of the 'Arabs has come," and proceeded to describe his appearance.

Constantine smiled at the bishop's* words and said, "Tell him to come to us."

**(It would appear to be that the bishop and the translator are one and the same person - translator's note)*

He began to prepare for 'Amr's ﷺ coming and decorated the reception area and ordered the priests to stand at his right and left while the chamberlains were to stand in front of him.

The translator went to 'Amr ﷺ and said, "The prince permits you to come."

46) 'Amr ﷺ and Constantine

'Amr ﷺ came riding his horse and astonished the Romans at his appearance. Upon reaching Constantine's tent he dismounted and the chamberlains escorted him to Constantine. Constantine smiled, brought him closer and welcomed him, "Welcome to the commander of his people!"

He wanted to seat 'Amr ﷺ on the throne, but he refused and said, "Allâh's carpet is purer than your throne because Allâh Most High has made the Earth a carpet and made it permissible for all to use. We are therefore on equal terms upon it. I do not wish to sit on anything besides that which Allâh has permitted for me."

He then knelt on the ground, sword in front of him and spear on his left thigh.

Constantine : What is your name?

'Amr ﷺ : 'Amr. I am from amongst the 'Arab nobility who are lords of resolution and are respected amongst their people.

Constantine : O 'Amr, you are a noble 'Arab youth. Your nation is the 'Arabs and my nation is the Romans - two related nations. Relatives do not shed each other's blood.

'Amr ؓ : Even if we are related by blood the bonds of Islâm are a higher relationship. When there is a difference of religion amongst brothers then it becomes permissible for one brother to slay the other. There is therefore an obstruction in the supposed relation we have. But in the first place, how can you claim that we are related when we are Quraysh and you are the sons of Rome?

Constantine : O 'Amr, are Âdam, Nûh, and Ibrâhîm not our common ancestors? Our ancestor is 'Îsû bin Îshâq and Îshâq is the brother of your ancestor, Ismâ'îl. Both were the sons of Ibrâhîm and it is not right that one brother commits aggression against another. They should be generous towards each other.

'Amr ؓ : You have spoken the truth. 'Îsû and we have common ancestry and Ismâ'îl is our forefather, may Allâh's salutations be upon him. Nûh ؑ partitioned the Earth after he became angry with his son, Hâm, knowing that the descendants of Hâm would never be satisfied with the partition and they ended up fighting over it for a long time. The truth is that this land does not belong to you but to the 'Amâliqah who owned it before you. Nûh ؑ had partitioned the Earth amongst his three sons, Sâm, Hâm and Yâfith and gave Sâm the lands from Syria to Yaman, including Hadramawt and Ghassân. The 'Arabs are all from him. This includes Qahtân, Tasm, Jadîth and 'Amlâq the forefather of the 'Amâliqah. They were the kings of Syria and were real 'Arabs because their natural language was 'Arabic.

Hâm was given the west and the coastal lands while Yâfith was given the lands between the east and west.

إِنَّ ٱلْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَن يَشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِۦ ۖ
وَٱلْعَٰقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

Verily the Earth belongs to Allâh. He grants it as inheritance to whomsoever He wills amongst His slaves and the good result is for the pious. [7:128]

We now wish to restore the original partition and take the habitations and rivers which are in your hands instead of our thorns, rocks and deserts.

Constantine now realised that 'Amr ؓ was a wise man.

Constantine : All that you have said is true except that the partition no longer applies. If you go against the new world order then you are nothing but rebels. I know for a fact that it is only because of your difficulties that you were forced to leave your homeland.

'Amr ﷺ : Yes, I can agree that difficulties also brought us out of our homeland. We used to eat barley bread and maize. Now that we have seen your food and taken a liking to it we will not leave you until we have snatched your lands from you, enslaved you and rest under these tall trees with shady branches laden with fruit. If you try to prevent us from that which we have tasted from your lands then we have such men with us who are more eager to fight you than you are to live.

47) 'Amr ﷺ invites the Romans to Islâm

Constantine was lost for words. He looked at his people and said, "This 'Arab is right. By the Churches! By the Communion! By Christ! By the Cross! We cannot resist."

'Amr ﷺ then took the opportunity to invite them to Islâm, "Allâh Most Honourable and Majestic has brought to you that which you were searching for all this time. If you wish to hold onto your lands then simply enter our Dîn and verify what we say for verily the only religion acceptable to Allâh is Islâm."

Constantine : O 'Amr, we will never abandon that religion upon which our fathers and grandfathers died.

'Amr ﷺ : Very well. If you refuse Islâm then you will have to pay the Jizyah in a state of humiliation on your behalf and your people's behalf.

Constantine : I cannot accept that also because the Romans will never comply. When my father proposed to do that they wanted to kill him.

'Amr ﷺ : Then that is all I can offer you. I have warned you to the best of my ability and now the only decision-maker between us can be the sword. Allâh knows that I called you to salvation but you transgressed just as your ancestor 'Îsû transgressed by hastening out of his mother's womb before his brother, Ya'qûb.

You claim to be our relatives but we declare before Allâh Most Honourable and Majestic that we have nothing to do with you and your relationship because you deny the Most Gracious Allâh. You are from 'Îsû and we are from Ismâ'îl ﷺ. Allâh chose the best lineage for our Prophet ﷺ right from Âdam ﷺ to his father, Âbdullâh. He

made the best of all Âdam's ﷺ descendants Ismâ'îl ﷺ. He and his descendants spoke 'Arabic while Is<u>h</u>âq ﷺ spoke the language of his father. Then He made the best of his descendants Kinânah. Then he made the best of all 'Arabs, Quraysh and the best of Quraysh Banû Hâshim. Then he made the best of Banû Hâshim, Banû 'Abdil Mu<u>tt</u>alib and the best of Banû 'Abdil Mu<u>tt</u>alib our Prophet Mu<u>h</u>ammad ﷺ. He sent him as a Prophet and Messenger. He sent Jibrâîl ﷺ to him with revelation who said to him, "I roamed the east of the Earth and the west and did not see anyone better than you."

The Romans quaked at the mention of Rasûlullâh ﷺ and terror entered Constantine's heart due to 'Amr's ؓ speech.

Constantine : True. God says that Prophets are sent from the best families of their nations. O 'Amr, is there anyone else amongst your companions who is clear in speech and swift in reply when he is questioned?

'Amr ؓ : By Allâh! I would love to fetch them to show such people to you.

He then jumped up and rode back to his camp. When the Muslims saw him they praised Allâh at his safe return and spent the night talking.

After leading them in <u>S</u>alâtul Fajr 'Amr ؓ ordered them to mount their horses to go against the enemy. They mounted and arranged their battle-formation.

48) The Battle

'Urwah bin Zayd narrates from Mûsâ, the freed-slave of the people of <u>Had</u>ramawt who narrates from Mûsâ bin 'Îmrân and Ibn a<u>s</u>-<u>S</u>abbâ<u>h</u>:

Constantine divided his forces into three. He put the infantry in front and aligned the left and right-wings. He raised a cross and went at the head of the army. 'Amr ؓ watched him. He had put his troops into formation and was intent on fighting. He completed the preparations of the Muslims and arranged them in one single row. In the right-wing he placed <u>S</u>a<u>h</u>âbah ؓ who were defenders of the Dîn such as Shura<u>h</u>bîl bin <u>H</u>asanah ؓ, the scribe of revelation. <u>S</u>âbûn bin Jabâyah al-Laythî, the famous Muslim horseman was in command of the left-wing.

A horseman suddenly emerged from the Roman ranks wearing brocade, armour and arm protection as well as a golden cross around his neck. He launched a violent attack with his spear from the right-wing to the left-wing, back to the right- wing and

then on the centre. He then paused and faced the Muslim army. He planted his spear in the ground, took out his bow and inserted an arrow. He fired at a man in the right-wing and wounded him. He then fired at another man in the left-wing and killed him.

'Amr ﷺ saw this and shouted, "Can you not see what this accursed Christian is doing with his bow? Who will suffice us against him and rid us of his evil?"

A man of Thaqîf came out wearing a dirty cloak. He carried a bow with him with an inserted arrow. The Roman saw that he wore no iron protection, only dirty fur and had no weapon besides the bow. He looked down upon him and his clothing but fired an arrow anyway. Despite the accursed one being the best archer of that time his arrow became entangled in the Thaqafî's fur and did him no harm. The Roman was furious. This was the first time in his life that he had not hit his target. He was about to fire a second arrow when the Thaqafî shot an arrow which he could not see because it was so small and light. Nevertheless it penetrated his throat and emerged from his nape. When the Roman dropped down dead the Thaqafî jumped on his horse, snatched his helmet and dragged the corpse to the Muslim camp. The Thaqafî's cousin came to welcome him, but he was so excited that he did not reply to him. The Thaqafî went and gave 'Amr ﷺ the spoils.

The Romans could hardly contain their rage at what he had done. We saw them pointing at the sky and understood that they were saying that the angels help us. Constantine took this incident very badly and said to a patrician, "Go and defend your religion against these 'Arabs."

49) My reliance upon Allâh is stronger than your iron

The patrician left for the Muslims. He wore green brocade, strong armour, arm protection and a golden cross around his neck. His slave-boy was behind him with a spare horse. He carried a sword and a shield. When he paused between the two armies and issued his challenge, the Muslims looked at him, but none accepted.

'Amr ﷺ called out, "O 'Arabs, who will fight him, gifting his life to Allâh the Most Honourable and Majestic?"

An 'Arab came and said, "I will."

"May Allâh bless you in that," replied 'Amr ﷺ.

The Muslim left silently until he came face to face with the Roman. The two circled each other for a while, swords lashing out. Eventually the Roman managed a faster

strike and reached beyond the Muslim's blow. The Muslim raised his shield of camel leather which the Roman cut into two halves but left his foe unharmed. The Muslim then struck out and cut through the patrician's helmet. The patrician stepped back and saved himself. Once he had caught his breath he attacked and badly wounded the Muslim who retreated to his companions.

His cousin called out, "He who gifts his life does not run from the enemy."

"Is this wound which I have suffered not enough for us?" he retorted, "Allâh will blame me for casting myself into destruction."

Although the wound was becoming worse he became affected by what his cousin had said. The cousin then said, "Take this helmet to protect your head."

"My reliance upon Allâh is stronger than your iron," he replied and sauntered off to the enemy, reciting:

يقول لي عند الخروج للقا   دونك هذا الترس فاجعله وقا

من علج سوء قد بغى وقد طغى   أقسمت بالله يمينًا صادقًا

لأتركنّ البيض فوق المرتقى   وأدخل الجنة دار الملتقى

He says to me as I go to the enemy,
"Take this for protection and safety"
"From the evil Disbeliever, sin and transgression he does both!"
In the name of Allâh I take a true oath
I will never wear that helmet,
But will enter Jannah where I will be met.

The Muslims began making du'â for him, "O Allâh, fulfil his desires."

The duel resumed. The Muslim lashed out such a horrendous blow at the Roman's shoulder that he killed him. He then attacked the Roman army itself bringing down many a champion before he attained martyrdom. May Allâh's mercy be upon him.

'Amr ﷺ commented, "This is a man who bought Jannah with his life. O Allâh, fulfil his desires."

50) We will meet at the pond of Rasûlullâh ﷺ

When Heraclius had sent Constantine to Caesarea he sent the patrician Cidamon with him. Cidamon was amongst the greatest Roman horsemen and it was said that he was Constantine's maternal cousin. He had campaigned against the Persians, the Turks and the Jarâmiqah. The accursed one knew all their languages.

He said to Constantine, "I have to go and fight the 'Arabs myself," and left wearing his upper-body armour. When the Muslims saw this giant of a man as if he was a mountain collapsing from its top down to its bottom and who glittered with jewels they shouted, "Lâ ilâha illallâh!" He paused in the middle of the battlefield and issued his challenge in his language. The 'Arabs rushed at him from every direction desiring what he was wearing.

'Amr ؓ called out, "Allâh's reward is better for you than that which is on him. Nobody should go with the intention of getting his spoils because then his action becomes for the sake of that. I heard Rasûlullâh ﷺ say that he whose migration is towards Allâh and His Rasûl then his migration is towards Allâh and His Rasûl and he who whose migration is for the sake of the world or to a woman whom he wants to marry then his migration is for whatever he set out for."

There was in the army a young boy ؓ from Yaman who had a mother and sister. They intended settling in Syria. His sister had said to him, "Make an effort for us to reach Syria so that we may eat of her fruits and luxuries."

"But I will go solely to fight for the pleasure of Allâh Most Honourable and Majestic," he replied, "I heard Mu'âth bin Jabal ؓ saying that the martyrs receive sustenance from their Rabb."

"How can they receive sustenance when they are dead?" she asked.

He said, "I heard Rasûlullâh ﷺ saying that Allâh Most High makes their souls in the forms of birds in Jannah. They eat of its fruits and drink from its rivers. Their souls fly around in those forms. That is the sustenance which Allâh makes for them."

Now at the battle of Caesarea he bid his mother and sister farewell and said, "We will meet at the pond of Rasûlullâh ﷺ." He then left for the battle on a lowly horse and carried a spear which had knots as he had repaired it in many places. The boy immediately attacked the patrician and thrust his spear at him but it became stuck in his armour. Cidamon cut the spear into pieces with his sword and attacked back. He split the boy's skull open in a single blow. The boy died, may Allâh have mercy upon

him. Cidamon pranced about the body and challenged the Muslims to duel him. When Ibn Qatham responded he killed him too.

These sights made Shura<u>h</u>bîl bin <u>H</u>asanah ﷺ reprimand himself, "Do you find delight in the killing of Muslims?"

He then went with the same flag which Abû Bakr ﷺ had tied for him on the day that he had left for Syria. When 'Amr ﷺ saw what he was intending to do he said, "O slave of Allâh, plant the flag so that it does not hinder you."

He planted the flag which was like a palm tree. It broke into a rock as if was part of it. He took this to be a sign of victory. He left with the Muslims making du'â for his victory.

Cidomon burst out laughing at his appearance. The accursed one had a loud voice and had a mighty physique while Shura<u>h</u>bîl ﷺ was quite thin due to excessive fasting and remaining awake at night to stand in <u>S</u>alâh. The combat began with the clashing of their swords. Shura<u>h</u>bîl ﷺ was the first to get a blow through, but it merely bounced off Cidamon's armour and the sword ended up stuck in his helmet. Cidamon immediately retaliated and wounded Shura<u>h</u>bîl ﷺ. The two then circled each other on their horses.

51) Repentance of <u>T</u>ulay<u>h</u>ah

Sa'îd bin Raw<u>h</u> narrates:

It was a cold, cloudy day. In the middle of their combat it began raining in torrents so they dismounted and wrestled in the mud. Cidamon punched Shura<u>h</u>bîl ﷺ in the stomach, threw him flat on the ground and then sat on his chest intending to strangle him. Shura<u>h</u>bîl ﷺ called put, "O Helper of those who seek help!"

He had hardly finished calling out when suddenly a horseman came galloping to them from the Roman side. He was wearing golden armour and rode on a magnificent horse. Cidamon thought that the Roman was bringing him the horse and had come to help him.

When he came near them he dismounted and kicked Cidamon off Shura<u>h</u>bîl ﷺ and said, "O slave of Allâh, help has come to you from the Helper of those who seek help."

Shurahbîl ﷺ jumped and stared in amazement at his action and words. The veiled Roman then unsheathed his sword and beheaded Cidamon. He then said, "O slave of Allâh, take the spoils."

Shurahbîl ﷺ : By Allâh! Nothing has ever amazed me as much as you do! I saw you coming from the *Roman* army!

Roman : I am the wretched one who is far from Allâh's mercy. I am Tulayhah bin Khuwaylid who claimed prophethood after the demise of Rasûlullâh ﷺ. I denied Allâh and claimed that revelation came to me from Heaven.

Shurahbîl ﷺ : O brother!

إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ ٱللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ

Verily Allâh's mercy is close to those who do good. [7:56]

Indeed his mercy encompasses everything, so whoever repents and turns towards Allâh He accepts his repentance and forgives him. Rasûlullâh ﷺ said that repentance wipes out whatever may have happened before it. O Ibn Khuwaylid, do you not know that when Allâh Most Pure and High revealed:

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

And My mercy encompasses everything. [7:156]

Everyone, even the devil, hoped for His mercy. So He then revealed:

فَسَأَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ

I shall ordain My mercy for those who are pious and pay the Zakâh. [7:156]

When the Jews then said, "We pay Zakâh and voluntary charity besides that," Allâh revealed:

وَٱلَّذِينَ هُم بِـَٔايَـٰتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

And those who believe in Our signs. [7:156]

The Jews then said, "We believe in what has been revealed in the scriptures and the Torah," so to show them that this mercy is exclusively for the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ He revealed:

ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ ٱلرَّسُولَ ٱلنَّبِىَّ ٱلْأُمِّىَّ

Those who follow the unlettered Messenger-Prophet. [7:156]

Tulayhah : I have no face to return to Islâm.

He wanted to leave but Shurahbîl ؓ stopped him.

Shurahbîl ؓ : O Tulayhah, I will not allow you to leave! You shall return with me to the army.

Tulayhah : Nothing stops me from coming with you except I fear that I will be killed by that harsh, hard-hearted man, Khâlid bin al-Walîd.

Shurahbîl ؓ : O brother, he is not with us. This is the army of 'Amr bin al-'Âs.

So he went with Shurahbîl ؓ. When they came near the camp the Muslims rushed to them and asked, "O Shurahbîl, who is this man with you? What a wonderful favour he did to you."

They did not recognise him because he was still veiled with the tail of his turban.

Shurahbîl ؓ : This is Tulayhah who had claimed prophethood.

Muslims : Has he repented and returned to Allâh?

Tulayhah : I repent unto Allâh Most Pure and High.

Shurahbîl ؓ then took him to Amr ؓ who smiled at him and welcomed him.

52) History of T̲ulayh̲ah

H̲assân bin 'Umar ar-Raba'î narrates from his grandfather:

When T̲ulayh̲ah claimed prophethood Khâlid ﷺ had waged Jihâd against him. T̲ulayh̲ah heard that he had already killed Musaylamah the false prophet and likewise al-Aswad al-'Anasî had been killed. T̲ulayh̲ah now feared that Khâlid ﷺ would kill him, so he fled at night with his wife to Syria.

He sought the protection of a man from the Kalb tribe. The Muslim Kalbî granted him protection and took him to his house. T̲ulayh̲ah remained with him for a time. One day the Kalbî asked him about his life. T̲ulayh̲ah confessed everything about his claim to prophethood and his war with Khâlid ﷺ. The enraged Kalbî immediately evicted him and T̲ulayh̲ah was forced to stay elsewhere in Syria although he had already renounced his false claim.

When he heard that Abû Bakr ﷺ had died he asked, "The one against whom I drew the sword has died. Who rules in his place?"

He was told, "'Umar bin al-Khat̲t̲âb."

"Harsh and hard-hearted!" exclaimed T̲ulayh̲ah and feared to go to him. He also feared that if Khâlid ﷺ should find him in Syria he would kill him. He therefore went to Caesarea intending to board a ship there and sail to some island. When he saw Constantine's army marching against the Muslims he said, "I will join this army. Perhaps I will get an opportunity to divert them and in so doing wash away some of my burden and gain closeness to Allâh and the Muslims."

When he saw Shurah̲bîl ﷺ on the brink of destruction he said, "How can I be patient in a situation like this?" and went to the rescue.

'Amr ﷺ now thanked him and assured him that his repentance would be accepted.

T̲ulayh̲ah : O 'Amr, I fear that if Khâlid sees me in Syria he will kill me.

'Amr ﷺ : I will show you how to protect yourself in this world and the next.

T̲ulayh̲ah : How?

'Amr ﷺ : I will write a letter certifying what you did and include the testimony of the Muslims. Take the letter to 'Umar and declare your repentance in front of him. He

will accept it and encourage you to conquer and kill and to fight the Romans in order to make up for your sins.

Tulayhah accepted this and 'Amr ﷺ wrote the letter.

Tulayhah took the letter and walked all the way to al-Madînah. He did not find 'Umar there and was told that he had gone to Makkah. He went on until he found him holding onto the cover of the Ka'bah. He joined him in this and said, "O Commander of the Believers, I swear by the Rabb of this House that I repent unto Allâh Most Honourable and Majestic from my past."

'Umar ﷺ : Who are you?

Tulayhah : Tulayhah bin Khuwaylid.

'Umar turned away from him and said, "Woe unto you! If I should pardon you then what happens tomorrow in front of Allâh with regard to the blood of 'Ukâshah bin Mihsan al-Asadî?"

Tulayhah : O Commander of the Believers, 'Ukâshah was a man whom Allâh blessed with martyrdom through me and through whom I became wretched. I hope that Allâh will forgive what I have done.

He then gave him 'Amr's ﷺ letter. Once 'Umar ﷺ had read it he became happy and said, "Rejoice because Allâh is Most Forgiving and Most Merciful," and ordered him to remain in Makkah until he returned to al-Madînah. He remained with 'Umar ﷺ for a few days until he returned to al-Madînah. There he sent him to fight the Persians.

53) Constantine flees

Shurahbîl ﷺ was saved when Tulayhah killed Cidamon and he returned to 'Amr ﷺ. It started raining so hard that the battle was called off. The Muslims suffered because most of them had no tents or houses so they withdrew to al-Jâbiyah where they took shelter in the houses there.

Through the mercy of Allâh Constantine's heart was now seized with fear when he saw the killing of Cidamon who was a pillar of support for him. He ordered his men to return to Caesarea and said, "O Romans, you know that the legions of al-Yarmûk could not withstand these 'Arabs and that my father has fled to Constantinople out of fear of them. They have conquered all of Syria except for this little coastal region

and I fear that we may be destroyed before the rest of the region. I would therefore prefer to withdraw rather than to remain here."

His men agreed and they left that night with the rain pouring on them.

Sa'îd bin Jâbir al-Awsî narrates:

That was entirely Allâh's mercy to the Muslims. On the fourth day the rain stopped and the sun shone. We left al-Jâbiyah to fight the Romans but found no trace of them but by Allâh, we were more pleased at seeing the sun than at their retreat.

'Amr ﷺ then wrote to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ:

> *In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*
>
> *From : 'Amr bin al-'Âs as-Sahmî*
>
> *To : The Chief Commander of the Muslim armies, Abû 'Ubaydah 'Amir bin al-Jarrâh.*
>
> *Salâm 'alayka wa rahmatullâhi wa barakâtuhu.*
>
> *O Companion of Rasûlullâh ﷺ!*
>
> *Constantine brought 80,000 Romans against us and we clashed at Nakhl. Shurahbîl was captured by Cidamon, Heraclius's maternal cousin. Allâh freed him by means of Tulayhah bin Khuwalid al-Asadî who killed Cidamon. I then sent him with a letter to 'Umar bin al-Khattâb.*
>
> *Constantine, the enemy of Allâh, has fled.*
>
> *I await your reply.*
>
> *Peace, Allâh's blessings and mercy be upon you and all the Muslims with you.*

He sent the letter with Jâbir bin Sa'îd al-Hadramî. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ was pleased at the safety of the Muslims and replied:

As soon as you receive my letter attack Caesarea. I will be heading towards Tyre, Acre and Tripoli.

Was-salâm.

He gave the letter to Jâbir bin Sa'îd for delivery.

54) Yûqannâ's ambush

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ now intended marching on the coast. 'Abdullâh Yûqannâ stood to address him, "O commander, Allâh Most Honourable and Majestic has destroyed the Polytheists and raised the banner of the Monotheists. Permit me to go ahead of you to the coast. It may be that I can conclude a successful campaign."

Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ : O 'Abdullâh, if you do something to get closer to Allâh you will find Him. Go as you wish.

Yûqannâ took his 4,000 men who used to serve him in Aleppo and had all now embraced Islâm. There was also in the 'Arab army a separate division of 3,000 Roman converts with their own commander.

Constantine had fled to Caesarea where he fortified himself. The people of Tripoli wrote to him requesting reinforcements. He therefore sent 3,000 men to Tripoli. When the reinforcements were nearing Tripoli they stopped at a meadow to let their horses graze. While they were there Yûqannâ and his men came across them. Falantius and his men who were on their way to Baytul Muqaddas to settle down there also accompanied Yûqannâ. The Roman commander, Garfius, saw these Muslims who were still dressed as Romans. He personally went to go and investigate. He welcomed them and asked, "Who are you?"

The Muslims replied, "We are those who sought the protection of the 'Arabs thinking them to be correct but soon discovered their evil ways. They are but irreligious sinners. We have now fled from them in order to save our faith. We are made up of men from Aleppo, Qinsarîn, 'Azâz, Dârim and Antioch who are fleeing to the protection of Caesar."

Garfius rejoiced at this and said, "Dismount and rest here with us for a while from all your fatigue. No doubt you were riding day and night out of fear of the 'Arabs."

Yûqannâ : Where are you going?

Garfius : Constantine is sending us to Tripoli.

Yûqannâ : Be alert. When we left the commander of the 'Arabs, Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ, he was intending to march on the coast.

Garfius : What use is your warning for us when our Empire has been vanquished and our days are numbered? We do not see the Cross benefiting its people in any way.

The Muslims dismounted and stayed with the Romans for a while. The Romans presented them with food which they ate. When they remounted to depart Garfius wanted to accompany them, but Yûqannâ said to him, "Stay with your men and let them dress in their best clothing for that will cause awe in the hearts of your enemy."

54) Conquest of Tripoli

Salîm bin 'Âmir narrates from Nawfal bin 'Abdillâh who narrates from Jarîr bin al-Bukâ who was the most knowledgeable man on the conquest of Syria:

Yûqannâ entered the coastal region with a scheme in mind. 200 'Arab households under the leadership of al-Harth bin Salîm had entered the coastal region in order to find grazing pasture for their camels. Yûqannâ raided them. He captured them and had them shackled. When night fell he gathered them and said, "Do not think that I have left Islâm. This is a scheme of mine to let the Romans hear that I raided the 'Arabs and captured them."

The 'Arabs now felt at ease and said to him, "If you do this to establish the Dîn then Allâh will certainly grant you victory over the enemy."

Yûqannâ then appointed a man to bring the captured goods with them.

When Garfius witnessed all this he felt that he could trust Yûqannâ. Yûqannâ found out that they were heading for Tripoli. So when he left the Romans, he and his men left the Tripoli road and hid at night in ambush. Garfius divided whatever goods his army had amongst his men and waited until nightfall to let the horses finish grazing. They then mounted and travelled on.

When the middle of the Roman party passed them, the Muslims sprang out and surrounded them. They also sent out horsemen to retrieve any stray Roman and killed or captured them all.

Yûqannâ now wanted to release al-Harth and his people but the chief replied, "My view is that you keep us like this. Great reward has been obtained from Allâh. Take

us to the cities of the enemy in this condition for Allâh will conquer for you whatever city you will go to like this."

"A good view," replied Yûqannâ.

He then gave orders for the prisoners to be tied and ordered 2,000 of his men and Falantius's men to remain in the ambush place until he called for them. He then dressed 3,000 of his men like the soldiers of Caesarea and left with them for Tripoli.

Everyone came out of Tripoli to welcome Yûqannâ because they thought this to be the army Constantine had sent. He had written to them, "I am sending 3,000 horsemen under Garfius son of Saliba."

Yûqannâ and his men entered the administration building and all the patricians, elders and prominent men came to see him. Once they had all gathered he had them all arrested and said, "O people of Tripoli, verily Allâh Most Pure has helped Islâm and its people. We were living a dark life, bowing before the cross and worshipping pictures and the Communion. We ascribed unto Allâh a wife and son. He then sent these 'Arabs to us who showed us guidance and so we joined them through the blessings of their Prophet ﷺ who is the Prophet whom Allâh has mentioned in the Torah and whom Christ ﷺ prophesied about. Verily Islâm is the Truth. It is complete honesty. They order the good, forbid the bad, establish prayer, pay charity, speak only the truth, are sincere, take Allâh to be one, deny him to have wife or son and they wage Jihâd in His Path as He had ordered His Messengers and Prophets before. Now either you accept Islâm or pay the Jizyah. Failing that, I will send you as slaves to the Arabs. This is all I have to say. Greetings to you all."

They now realised that Yûqannâ had overcome them and must have overpowered Constantine's men enroute. They said, "O sir, we will obey you."

Some of them embraced Islâm while others agreed to pay Jizyah, but Yûqannâ was fair to them all and summoned his remaining men. They untied the prisoners and offered them Islâm, but they refused so were kept in captivity.

Yûqannâ wrote to Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ about all this. He sent the letter with al-Harth bin Salîm of al-Ahmar Valley and said to him, "O slave of Allâh, be the bearer of glad tidings to the commander."

"I will do that if Allâh Most High wills," he replied.

When he reached Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ he made salâm and gave him the letter. Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ read the letter and rejoiced. He asked, "Did you not ask me for

permission for your tribe to settle in al-Ahmar Valley? How did you end up in Tripoli?"

"Allâh's decree and predestination sent me to Tripoli," he replied, "Yûqannâ raided us and took us prisoner..."

He continued with the story which amazed Abû 'Ubaydah ﷺ. He said, "O Allâh, keep them firm and help them."

'Âmir bin Aws narrates from Ibn Sâlim who narrates from Mûsâ bin Mâlik:

When the rain stopped 'Amr bin al-'Âs ﷺ departed from al-Jâbiyah and camped at the gates of Caesarea. As for Yûqannâ, after he had conquered Tripoli and inspected its walls and gates he set his men at the gate and instructed, "Do not let anyone out of the gates."

There were many ships in the harbour which he grounded and confiscated. Nobody in the coastal lands knew about these events.

After a few days a fleet of about fifty ships arrived at Tripoli. Yûqannâ allowed them to land and when most of the sailors had disembarked he summoned them and asked, "Where are you from?"

The sailors replied, "We are from Cyprus and Crete. We are taking equipment and weapons for Prince Constantine."

Yûqannâ pretended to be pleased and said, "I also wish to go with you."

He then ordered them to be taken to the guesthouse and also sent for the captains.

They were all entertained. After they had all eaten he said, "I wish to send with you some provisions, fodder and weapons in service of the prince but you will have to stay here for me to complete my preparations."

"O sir," exclaimed the sailors, "We are in a hurry as it is and fear that the prince will reprimand us. We will not be able to bear his rebuke."

Yûqannâ however insisted until they agreed. He then said, "As an assurance I would prefer that you drop your sails and oars and stay here in the city."

They agreed to this also and anchored near the city walls. All of them except three disembarked.

Yûqannâ easily seized the ships. He appointed Falantius, his cousins and al-Harth bin Salîm over the city while he filled the ships with his own men. He was about to embark at sunset when he saw Khâlid ﷺ arriving with 1,000 horsemen. Yûqannâ fell into prostration out of gratitude and handed the city over to him. He told him what had happened and also appraised him of his next scheme. "May Allâh help you," replied Khâlid ﷺ.

Yûqannâ then set sail that night.

56) Yûqannâ is betrayed

By morning the Muslim fleet had arrived at Tyre which was governed by Armuyil son of Nashta. Tyre had a garrison of 4,000. Yûqannâ ordered gongs to be beaten and the flags to be unfurled. The harbour master went to report to the governor, "They are from Crete and Cyprus. They are taking fodder, food and equipment to Caesarea for Constantine."

The people rejoiced and told them to disembark.

Yûqannâ disembarked with 900 men whom he had personally selected. The governor prepared a great feast for them and presented the leaders with robes. Yûqannâ was waiting for night to arrive in order to launch the attack. He had left some men on the ships and said, "If we are not successful you are not to disembark but sail straight back to Khâlid ﷺ and tell him what happened."

I (al-Wâqidî) have never heard a more amazing story than this! Ibn Muzâhim narrated to me from al-Arqat bin 'Âmir who narrated from Yâsir ar-Raba'î:

After Yûqannâ and his 900 men arrived in Tyre and had eaten and their leaders had received robes from the governor, one of Yûqannâ's cousins secretly approached the governor. This cousin had misguidance established in his heart and disbelief encompassed the very substance of his body. He told the governor the truth about Yûqannâ and what he was planning. He told him that he said that Yûqannâ was a Muslim who fought for the 'Arabs against the Romans and that he had already conquered Tripoli where he had captured Caesar's man, Germanius.

Armuyil acted immediately and took his men to arrest the Muslims. A great clamour was raised. When the sailors heard this they realised that their comrades had been caught. They became greatly depressed and they now feared for themselves.

Armuyil placed 1,000 guards over the Muslim prisoners and said, "Take them to the prince so that he may do with them as he pleases."

The guards began rebuking the prisoners, "What did you possibly see in the religion of the 'Arabs to make you follow them and abandon your faith, the faith of your forefathers? Christ has flung you away from his door and distanced you from him."

They were about to take them to Constantine when shouting was heard at the gates. The people of the villages around Tyre were fleeing to the city. When they were questioned they replied, "The 'Arabs have come."

When 'Amr bin al-'Âs ﷺ arrived at Caesarea, Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ started marching on Tyre. When Armuyil heard that he had arrived he ordered the gates to be locked and had the walls and towers manned. He had the prisoners taken to the castle to ensure that they would not attempt anything. The Christians spent the night guarding and keeping fires lit on the walls. They danced and drank the night away.

Yazîd bin Abî Sufyân ﷺ arrived in the morning. When the governor saw how few the Muslims were he entertained hopes of defeating them and said, "By Christ! I will certainly go and fight this small speck of an army and wipe them out."

Armuyil got dressed and ordered his men out. He left his cousin, Basil, behind to guard the Muslims.

57) Basil and Rasûlullâh ﷺ

Basil had read the previous revealed scriptures and reports from the past and had seen Rasûlullâh ﷺ at the monastery of Buhayrah the monk. Basil was visiting Buhayrah when the caravan of the Quraysh and the camels of Khadîjah bint Khuwaylid arrived. Buhayrah looked at the caravan and saw Rasûlullâh ﷺ in the middle with a cloud above him, shading him from the sun. When he realised what he was seeing he exclaimed, "By God! This is the description of the Prophet who will be sent from the lowlands of 'Arabia."

The Quraysh halted and dismounted while Rasûlullâh went on his own. He went to lean against a dried out tree which suddenly sprouted leaves. When Buhayrah witnessed this he invited the Quraysh for a meal. They all entered the monastery except Rasûlullâh ﷺ who had remained behind to tend to the camels. When Buhayrah saw that he was missing he asked, "O Quraysh, is anyone left behind?"

Quraysh : Yes, one of us remained behind to guard the caravan and tend to the camels.

Buhayrah : What is his name?

Quraysh : Muhammad bin 'Abdillâh.

Buhayrah : Have his parents died?

Quraysh : Yes.

Buhayrah : Did his grandfather and uncle foster him?

Quraysh : Yes.

Buhayrah : O Quraysh, by God! He is your chief through whom your prestige will be raised throughout the world.

Quraysh : How do you know this?

Buhayrah : When you came there was no rock or stone except that they fell down in prostration to him.

Basil always remained thereafter perplexed at this matter but he knew that Buhayrah never lied. Now that Armuyil had put him in charge of the prisoners he said to himself, "Islâm is the truth about which Buhayrah had predicted. Perhaps Allâh will forgive me if I free these people."

Allâh had made a wonderful arrangement for His believing slaves in that all the youth of Tyre left to fight Yazîd ﷺ and none remained behind except the commoners. These commoners climbed the walls to watch the outcome of the battle. When Basil saw that the city was deserted and that all the people were busy with the battle he confirmed his decision to free the Muslims. He went at night and addressed Yûqannâ, "O prince, why did you leave the religion of your fathers and grandfathers for the religion of these 'Arabs? What truth did you see to make you follow them whereas the Romans used to regard you as a firm ally?"

Yûqannâ : O Basil, that same truth which has become apparent to you became apparent to me. I heard a voice saying, "He Who guided you to His Dîn will free you" The voice then continued to say that you would be the means of our escape.

This made Basil even firmer in his belief.

Basil : Allâh has made your tongue speak the truth. Allâh removed the veils of forgetfulness ever since I saw Rasûlullâh ﷺ at Bu<u>h</u>ayrah's monastery. He was amongst the caravan of the Quraysh.

Amongst the signs of his prophethood which I witnessed was that as he travelled the trees would follow him and a cloud above his head shaded him. He leaned against a dry tree which immediately sprouted leaves. Bu<u>h</u>ayrah told me that he had learned that a group of prophets had leaned against that very tree and sat around it but it never sprouted for them. For Rasûlullâh ﷺ however it sprouted leaves *and* ripe fruit! I was amazed at that. I also heard Bu<u>h</u>ayrah say, "By God! This is the one about whom Christ had prophesied. Glad tidings to him who follows him, believes in him and verifies him."

After my visit to the monk I went on business to Constantinople and travelled over the Empire and settled down for as long as Allâh willed. After a while I went to Caesarea where I saw that the Romans were highly agitated. Upon enquiry it was said to me, "A prophet called Mu<u>h</u>ammad bin 'Abdillâh has appeared in al-<u>H</u>ijâz. His people expelled him from Makkah and so he went to the city which the Tubba' built. He has now conquered his people."

I kept on asking about him and his news continued increasing until he passed away. His Companion, Abû Bakr ؓ, then succeeded him and despatched armies to Syria. He only remained for a short while before he died. 'Umar ؓ then came to power and conquered our cities and defeated our armies. All this time I was waiting for them to arrive here at the coast until now at last Allâh has brought them.

58) Conquest of Tyre

Yûqannâ : What have you decided upon?

Basil : By Allâh! I have decided to leave my people and join you because the truth is clear.

He then freed Yûqannâ and his men and equipped and armed them. He said to Yûqannâ, "I have the keys of the city gate and the army has left to fight the 'Arabs. There is no one to fear in the city. Rise in the name of Allâh."

Yûqannâ : May Allâh reward you well. He has guided you to His Dîn and the road of salvation and sealed you with goodness. We will now have to show ourselves and send for our men on the ships so that we may become a single hand.

Basil : I will do that.

Basil and one of Yûqannâ's clansmen went and opened the harbour gates. They reached the ships on a rowboat and informed the Muslims what had happened. The Muslims therefore followed the two and sailed to the harbour and disembarked. They entered Tyre and Allâh kept the Disbelievers blind.

When the Muslims wanted to attack Yûqannâ prohibited them and said, "That is not a good idea. I need a volunteer who will gift his life for Allâh Most Honourable and Majestic. He should secretly leave the gate for the Muslim army and tell the commander about us so that if anyone hears us they must not be frightened but must continue fighting the army outside."

A man volunteered and left. Basil locked the gates behind him. The volunteer reached and informed Yazîd ﷺ who fell into prostration out of gratitude and ordered his men to be prepared for a sudden attack on the enemy.

When Yûqannâ, upon whom be Allâh's mercy, heard that the Muslims had received his information he said to his men, "500 of you will climb the walls and whoever is thereon."

Basil protested, "That is not a good idea. They are only civilians who do not affect us. Perhaps Allâh will guide them to Islâm. Rather, order your men to seize the steps leading up to the walls so that they cannot descend and will be forced to beg for immunity."

Yûqannâ agreed to this and appointed men to seize the steps. He and his men then shouted, "Lâ ilâha illallâh Muhammadur Rasûlullâh!" Whoever was in the city or on the walls heard this and understood that the prisoners had escaped. They lost their senses and their hearts were anxious about their children and families. They were utterly confused.

When Yazîd ﷺ heard the clamour he understood that the Muslims had arisen in the city. He proclaimed, "Allâhu Akbar!" and the Muslims responded, "Allâhu Akbar! Lâ ilâha illallâh!"

When the governor heard the clamour he too understood that the prisoners had escaped and they were the cause of the noise. Fear gripped the Romans' hearts. As they gazed at the Muslims' fires and saw them preparing for an assault they lost their patience. Their hearts broke to think of their lost wealth and children in the city while Caesar's son was sitting safely in Caesarea and had failed to help them. They turned and fled with the Muslims in hot pursuit. Their tents and their contents were taken.

In the morning Yûqannâ opened the gates and Yâzîd and his army entered Tyre and took all the wealth of the Romans. The people were still on the walls and now asked for immunity which was granted to them. When they all came down Yâzîd said to them, "Allâh Most Honourable and Majestic has conquered your city for us by the sword so legally you are now all our slaves. Whatever we decide to do to you we can do. However, when we make an agreement we always fulfil it and when we speak we speak the truth. We have granted you the safety of your lives but whoever amongst you refuses Islâm will have to pay Jizyah. As for those who do accept Islâm then they have the same rights and duties as us."

The people accepted these terms and the majority accepted Islâm.

59) Conquest of Caesarea

When Constantine heard that Tyre had been conquered he knew that his time was up. He wasted no time in fleeing. At night he loaded all his wealth, treasure, hoards and servants onto ships and set sail for Constantinople. When the people of Caesarea saw this they came out and offered their surrender to 'Amr bin al-'As who accepted their surrender on payment of a 100,000 dînâr fine and whatever wealth and men Constantine had left behind. This they accepted. 'Amr wrote the treaty for them and entered Caesarea. He took whatever the prince had left behind and fixed the Jizyah payable from the following year at four Dînârs as 'Umar had instructed him.

He then sent a part of the army to Tyre under Yâsir bin 'Ammâr bin Salamah, an old man who had witnessed the battles of Hunayn and an-Nadîr with Rasûlullâh. Mâlik bin 'Awn an-Nadîrî had killed his brother at Hunayn.

'Amr entered Caesarea on a Wednesday of the first ten days of Rajab 19 Hijrî. When this news spread the remaining cities all surrendered: ar-Ramlah, Acre, Ascalon, Nablus, Tiberias, Bayrût, Jabalah and al-Lâthiqîyah.

Thus Allâh made the Muslims masters of all Syria through the blessings of the Chief of all the Messengers,

صلى الله عليه وسلم

Through the blessings of Allâh ﷻ this translation was completed in Shawwâl 1423 Hijrî (in 101 days). May Allah accept it

Translator
Sulaymân al-Kindî

Appendices

Appendix A: 'Arabic names

Readers unfamiliar with the 'Arabic name system might be confused with one individual being addressed with different names. To know the translations of certain words used in this system would be useful:

Abû or *Abî* : Father (of)...

Al : Definite article i.e. "the". If the word has the "î" of association at the end then it usually indicates association with a particular tribe or place etc. For example al-Makhzûmî means one of the Makhzûm clan.

Banû or *Banî* : Sons (of)... This indicates a tribal name.

Bin or *Ibn* : Son (of)...

Bint : Daughter (of)...

Mawlâ : Freed-slave (of)...

Umm : Mother (of)...

Example: Khâlid's ﷺ full name is Abû Sulaymân Khâlid bin al-Walîd al-Makhzûmî ﷺ. This means that Khâlid is the father of Sulaymân and son of al-Walîd of the Makhzûm clan. He is therefore alternatively called Ibn al-Walîd or Abû Sulaymân.

Appendix B: List of Names

To help alleviate the confusion which might be caused by a single personality being called by several names a list a full names of certain Sahabah ﷺ appearing in this book is provided:

1. **Abân** bin Sa'îd bin al-'Âs al-Umawî
2. **'Abdullah** bin Ja'far bin Abî Tâlib al-Hâshimî
3. **'Abdullâh** bin Qurt al-Azdî
4. Abû 'Abdillâh **'Amr** ibn al-'Âs as-Sahmî
5. Abû 'Abdillâh **Jâbir** bin 'Abdillâh as-Sulamî
6. Abû 'Abdillâh **Mu'âth** bin Jabal al-Khazrajî
7. Abû 'Abdillâh **'Uthmân** bin 'Affân al-Umawî
8. Abû 'Abdillâh **az-Zubayr** bin al-'Awwâm al-Asadî
9. Abû 'Amr Jarîr bin 'Abdillâh al-Bujalî
10. **Abû Bakr** 'Abdullâh al'Atîq bin 'Uthmân Abî Quhâfah at-Taymî
11. Abû al-Fadl **al-'Abbâs** bin 'Abdil Muttalib al-Hâshimî
12. Abû Hafs **'Umar** ﷺ bin al-Khattâb al-'Adawî
13. Abû al-Hasan **'Alî** bin Abî Tâlib al-Hâshimî
14. **Abû Hurayrah** 'Abdurahmân bin Sakhr ad-Dawsî
15. Abû Khâlid **Yazîd** bin Abî Sufyân al-Umawî
16. Abû Sa'îd Khâlid bin Sa'îd al-Umawî
17. Abû Sufyân Sakhr bin Harb al-Umawî
18. Abû Sulaymân **Khâlid** bin al-Walîd al-Makhzûmî
19. **Abû Tharr** Jundub bin Junâdah al-Ghifârî
20. **Abû 'Ubaydah** 'Amir bin 'Abdillâh bin al-Jarrâh
21. Abû al-Walîd **'Ubâdah** bin as-Sâmit as-Sâlimî al-Ansârî

22. **Asmâ** bint 'Umays
23. **Al-Fadl** bin al-'Abbâs al-Hâshimî
24 **Dirâr** bin al-Azwar al-Kindî
25. **Hind** bint 'Uqbah al-'Abshamîyah
26. **'Ikramah** bin Abî Jahl 'Amr bin Hishâm al-Makhzûmî
27. **Sa'îd** bin Khâlid bin Sa'id al-Umawî
28. Umm 'Abdillâh **'Âishah** bint Abî Bakr at-Taymîyah
29. Umm 'Abdillâh **Asmâ** bint Abî Bakr at-Taymîyah
30. **Wâthilah** bin al-Asqa' al-Laythî

We note that although the Banû Umayyah clan had some sinful members, nos. 1,7,15,16,17 were also from this family.

Appendix C: Syntax of names

The vowels of a certain word may change according to the rules of 'Arabic grammar.

Example: 'Abdullâh and Abû 'Abdillâh.

Appendix D: Transliteration

ا	a	ز	z
ب	b	س	s
ت	t	ش	sh
ث	th	ص	<u>s</u>
ج	j	ض	<u>d</u>
ح	<u>h</u>	ط	<u>t</u>
خ	kh	ظ	zh
د	d	ع	'
ذ	<u>th</u>	غ	gh
ر	r	ف	f

Appendix E: Yâzîd ﷺ and Caesarea

There appears to be some contradiction with regards to 'Yâzîd ﷺ and 'Amr ﷺ at the siege of Caesarea about which the Urdu translator wrote a lengthy commentary.

Firstly, who besieged Caesarea? Yazîd ﷺ first arrives (chapter 4, section 17). 'Amr ﷺ then arrives (5:43) but the author only mentions in the end (5:56) that when 'Amr ﷺ arrived at Caesarea Yazîd ﷺ left for Tyre. There is therefore no contradiction.

Secondly, 'Amr ﷺ mentions (5:44) that Yazîd ﷺ received reinforcements at Qinsarîn when it is clearly mentioned that the reinforcements came when he was at Caesarea (4:17). The humble opinion of this translator is that Qinsarîn and Caesarea look almost the same when written in the old undotted 'Arabic and as often the case the letter *alif* is omitted. 'Amr ﷺ in fact mentioned Caesarea but an error occurred in the transcription - and Allâh ﷻ knows best. In the translation Qinsarîn has been replaced with Caesarea.

Glossary

Allâh: The one and only deity.

Allâhu Akbar: Allâh is the greatest.

Al-Masjid al-Aqsâ: The sacred Masjid Baytul Muqaddas.

Al-Masjid al-Harâm: The sacred Masjid in Makkah.

Ansârî (pl. Ansâr): Literally "helper". A Sahâbî ؓ of al-Madînah. The Ansâr ؓ earned this title because the help they rendered to Rasûlullâh ﷺ and the Muhâjirîn.

Athân: The formal call to Salâh given a while before the Salâh so that the worshippers may gather. The *Iqâmah* is given immediately prior to the Salâh.

Baytul Muqaddas: Jerusalem.

Bilâl: The first muaththin in Islam. Called 'ibn Ribâh' after his father and also 'ibn Hamâmah' after his mother.

Caesar: Title of the Roman emperors.

Constantinople: Capital of the Byzantine (Roman) Empire. Modern Istanbul, Turkey.

Dîn (pl. adyân): Usually translated as religion but religion does not fully describe Islâm which covers every aspect of a Muslim's existence.

Dînâr (pl. Danânîr): Gold coin worth 10 silver coins. From Latin, "*denarii.*"

Dirham (pl.Darâhim): Silver coin. From Greek, "*drachma.*"

Du'â (pl. ad'iyâ): supplication to Allâh ﷻ.

Farsakh: 5.4864 km

Firdaws: The highest level of Paradise.

Hadramawt: Homeland of the Kindah tribe in South Yaman. The terms Kindah, Kindî, Kunûd, Hadramawt, Hadramî, Hadârimah are thus used interchangeably.

Qalansuwah: Brimless Arab headgear.

Hijrah: Migration of the Muslims from Makkah to save their faith. There were two hijrahs to Ethiopia and the third with the participation of Rasûlullâh ﷺ was to al-Madînah.

Hijrî: The Islâmic calendar is dated *Hijrî* i.e. from the year of the *Hijrah* to al-Madînah.

Ibrâhîm: The Prophet Abraham ﷺ.

Iqâmah: *see Athân.*

'Îsâ: The Prophet Jesus ﷺ.

'Îsû: Esau, brother of the Prophet Ya'qûb (Jacob) ﷺ

Islâm: The final Dîn of Allâh ﷻ brought by the final Prophet, Muhammad ﷺ.

Jahannam: Hell.

Janâzah: *see Salâh.*

Jannah (pl. Jannât): Paradise.

Jibrâîl: The archangel Gabriel ﷺ.

Jihâd: Any struggle in obedience to Allâh ﷻ. It may take one of these forms amongst others:

1) *Jihâd bil-Lisân*: -with the tongue, e.g. speaking against evil.

2) *Jihâd bil-Qalam*: -with the pen, e.g. using literature to spread the message.

3) *Jihâd bis-Sayf*: -with the sword. This is the primary usage of the word, Jihâd, in this book.

4) *Jihâd 'alan-Nafs: -against the base human desires.*

Jizyah: Poll-tax payable by non-Muslims living under Islâmic rule. In return their lives, property and religion is respected and they are exempted from military service.

Ka'bah: The cubic building in al-Masjid al-Harâm. It is the *Qiblah* of the Muslims.

Khalîfah (pl. khulafâ): Literally "successor." The successors to Rasûlullâh ﷺ in his duties as head of the Muslims in all affairs except that they were not prophets .

Khutbah (pl. khutubât): Lecture, especially used to refer to the lecture preceding Salâtul Jumu'ah.

Lâ ilâha illallâh: There is no deity but Allâh ﷻ.

Mihrâb (pl. mahârîb): Prayer-niche in front of masjid indicating the Qiblah.

Mimbar (pl. Manâbir): Pulpit.

Tawheed: Monotheism – Belief in the One-ness of Allâh ﷻ

Muaththin: One who proclaims the *Athân*.

Muhâjir (pl. Mahâjirîn): Those Sahâbah ؓ who performed the Hijrah.

Muhâjirâh (pl. Muhâjirât): Those female Sahâbiyaat ؓ who performed the Hijrah.

Mujâhid: One who engages in Jihâd.

Muslim (lit. one who submits): One who submits to Allâh ﷻ in accepting His Dîn of Islâm.

Nûh: The Prophet Noah ؑ.

Patrician: Roman upper class.

Qiblah: Direction which Muslims must face during Salâh.

Roman Empire: The empire which concerns us is not the ancient Roman Empire, but the eastern half after the partition. It was variously called the latter Roman Empire, the Eastern Roman Empire, the Greek Empire (because they spoke Greek) or the Byzantine Empire. The translator chose the word Roman because they themselves thought of themselves as "Romans" and this is the word used in the 'Arabic texts.

Rasûl (pl. Rusul): Messenger sent by Allâh for the guidance of Mankind.

Rasûlullâh: The Messenger of Allâh. In this book it refers to the final Messenger, Muhammad bin 'Abdillâh ﷺ.

Sahâbî (pl. Sahâbah / Ashâb): A Muslim who met Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

Sahâbîyah (pl. Sahâbîyât): A female Sahâbî.

Salâh: Formal prayer of the Muslims. Five are compulsory:

1) *Maghrib*: After sunset.

2) *'Ishâ*: Night.

3) *Fajr*: Between dawn and sunrise.

4) *Zhur*: Early afternoon.

5) *'Asr*: Late afternoon.

On Fridays Zhur is substituted with *Jumu'ah*.

Salâtul Janâzah: The prayer performed for the dead.

Salâtul Khawf (lit. prayer of fear): Method of congregational Salâh in the battlefield whereby the Muslims divide into two groups but still follow a single imâm (one who leads the Salâh).

Sunnah (pl. sunan): Acts established from Rasûlullâh ﷺ.

Taybah: Another name for al-Madînah.

Ûqiyah: 122.472 g

Ummah (pl. umam): Literally community. *Ummah ad-Da'wah* are all those who live after Rasûlullâh ﷺ had received his prophethood whether they are Muslims or not. *Ummah al-Ijâbah* are those who accept his message i.e. Muslims. In this book as in most Islâmic literature it is the latter that is meant.

Wasaq: 192.7 kg.

Wudû: Compulsory washing of the body before Salâh.

Yathrib: Pre-Islâmic name of al-Madînah.

Zakâh: Annual charity compulsory on Muslims owning a certain amount of wealth.